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SICKNESS

Its Trials and Blessings

" There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit."

" For the body is not one member, but many."

*" But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body,
as it hath pleased Him."*

*" And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it ;
or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it."*

SICKNESS

Its Trials and Blessings

NEW EDITION



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1868

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TO ALL
WHO ARE CALLED BY SICKNESS
TO "FILL UP THAT WHICH IS BEHIND"
OF THE SUFFERINGS OF CHRIST,
AND TO WALK
"IN THE BLESSED STEPS OF HIS MOST HOLY LIFE,"
"WHO HIMSELF BORE OUR SICKNESSES,"

This Volume
IS AFFECTIONATELY DEDICATED.

Preface

THE writer of this book has herself ~~been~~ tried by long years of sickness, and has ~~asked~~ a friend who has had the privilege of ministering to her, to certify his belief, as a clergyman, that these pages are not inconsistent with the teaching of the Church of England, directing her obedient children to the Holy Scriptures—the fountain of ~~true~~ consolation, and showing how to apply them.

It was a careful study of the Service for the Visitation of the Sick that first taught her ~~the~~ meaning and the blessings of sickness; and her desire has been, if it may please God, to be instrumental in pointing out to others the same sources of consolation.

It only remains to say, that it is not intended that every part of this book should apply to every case; but it is hoped that something may be gained


by many sufferers, in a great variety of cases, from the experience of one who has been called to pass through various stages of trial. Something too of consolation may be found from the discovery that others have felt the same; and something perhaps of additional sympathy obtained for the sick, by the more particular acquaintance of those around them with the nature of their trials.

It is chiefly through the instrumentality of these trials that the Lord's people are made like unto Himself. And they are "never so truly happy," as when they are learning in that which one of our martyred Reformers called "Christ's Own Sweet School."

The name of an individual clergyman can give no authority, scarcely any recommendation, to this book; but it is added at the request of the writer, in token of assent to all that she has written.

F. C. MASSINGBERD.

S. LEONARD'S-ON-SEA,
March 20, 1850.



Contents

PART I

Manner of Looking upon Sickness

SECT.		PAGE
	Introduction	3
I.	First Impressions of a Long Sickness	10
II.	Sickness, a Hidden State ; Trials are to be expected in it	13
III.	Twofold character of Sickness	17
IV.	The seeming length of Sickness ,	19
V.	Lessons which various Illnesses are meant to teach .	21
VI.	Sickness a vocation	23
VII.	Probability of Recovery ; opposite Temptations about it	28

PART II

Trials and Temptations of Sickness

PERSONAL TRIALS

I.	Pain	33
II.	Weakness	37
III.	Loss of the Powers of Mind.	48

SECT.	PAGE
IV. The Nearness of Life	56
V. Longings	57
VI. Circumstances	62
VII. Efforts	67
VIII. Nervousness	73
IX. Taking Opiates	77
X. Fancies about Food	79
XI. Nights	84
XII. Days	88
XIII. Disappointments and Discouragements	95
XIV. Poverty	98
XV. Difficulty of Prayer	102
XVI. Absence of Work, and Overtasked Strength	116
XVII. Anniversaries	122

RELATIVE TRIALS

I. The Family and Friends	129
II. Letters	139
III. Visits of Clergymen	142
IV. Medical Advice and Medical Visits	148
V. Nurses and Attendants	155
VI. Giving Trouble	161

TEMPTATIONS

I. That no one can Sympathize	165
II. Irritability	167
III. Impatience	171
IV. Considering Symptoms	173

PART III

Duties and Responsibilities of Sickness

SECT.	PAGE
I. Contentment	177
II. Sympathy	185
III. Patience	191
IV. Submission	199
V. Hope	206
VI. Cheerfulness	212
VII. Thanksgiving	219
VIII. To remember the Poor, and to aid others in their Works of Mercy	227

PART IV

The Blessings of Sickness

The Blessings of Sickness	233
-------------------------------------	-----

PART V

Miscellaneous

I. Reading the Scriptures	245
II. Sunday	247
III. The Holy Communion	257
IV. Prayer for Recovery	264

PART VI

Convalescence

SECT.	PAGE
I. Its Pleasures and its Trials	271
II. The being called back to Life when Death seemed near, and how to become content with this lot	276

PART VII

Death

I. The Fear of Death, and the Fear taken away	285
II. The Publicity of a Death-bed, and the Temptation to choose the Circumstances of it	291
III. The Right Way of viewing Death.	293
APPENDIX	297

PART I

MANNER OF LOOKING UPON SICKNESS



Introduction

EACH one knows that he must *die* alone. How few realize that, for the most part, it is God's appointment that each should *live* alone, and *suffer* alone? Each one must "bear his own burden,"¹ feel his own incommunicable grief, which "often lies like lead upon the heart, or like ice within the heart." Solitude and a sense of isolation are not peculiar to sickness. They who walk abroad in the busy world have their own "loneliness of heart," and find it "truly hard to bear." This deep, weary sense of isolation is a call to the sick to sympathize with, and better to understand the trials of those in health. There is in every heart more or less craving for sympathy; a restless craving in those who have not learned where to turn for true sympathy, and that "One only and only One is enough" to satisfy all their yearnings. There are few who do not think it hard that their lot of woe is not more borne by others. They think it *ought* to be; they expect it; they crave for it; they "cry

¹ Gal. vi. 5.

out in their pangs"² that their lot is hard and peculiar, that it is not so with others. They go on crying, till so loud and constant becomes their voice, that they do not, except occasionally, hear "the still small voice" which is speaking to them, and saying, "Listen to me." When they do listen, it tells them that their lot is not peculiar, but the common lot of all; that each one after his own manner (or rather, that manner that God sees fitted to his character) is living alone; some more, some less so; that there is a meaning in it all, an absolute necessity; that those who do "hear the rod, and who hath appointed it,"³ then cease to be alone in their loneliness; that the whole end is to drive them away from creatures, from themselves, from all earthly cravings, and to drive them to seek for God alone, and to dwell in Him. The lesson is the same in all cases, but there are different ways of learning it. The path in which each man walks is untrodden by any other; he cannot judge of its roughness, or how many thorns there may be in it. No one can fully see the extent and details of the trial which another is called to bear. One comes near and says words of sympathy for one part of the trial; another for some other part; a third sees no trial in it at all; a fourth thinks it must be much less trying than some other form of suffering, or than his own. No one but the sufferer sees it in all its bearings and forms of inward suffering; no one else feels the acute pain of heart and all its

² Isa. xxvi. 17.

³ Mic. vi. 9.

throbbings. Each one leaves some disappointment behind, or else makes the sufferer say, "I should be quite alone, or at least only very imperfectly understood, if I had my fellow-sufferers only to depend on. Each one seems wrapped in his own sorrow; his eyes too intently fixed on *it* to see mine, except very dimly. I must 'appeal to the world where all things are understood,' and to Him who 'weigheth the spirits.'"

The weight of life, the burden of doing, are hard to bear; still more so, perhaps, when borne in conjunction with sickness. The weary longing for work: the toilsome days which all seem spent for self, and in which you seem never to do any thing for others, but merely to add very much to their burdens; and you grow sadder and more hopeless as time goes on and brings no relief. As each morning dawns, it seems but to open another day of selfishness. It seems to you that you *could* do something, *what* you cannot exactly tell, where to turn for work you do not know. Your friends, perhaps, think you unfit for any exertion; in their kindness, as they suppose, they do every thing for you, remove all work from you, tell you that you are not wanted, that there are plenty of people who can supply your place. They mean it in true kindness, but you do not see it so; you think that if they would only find some niche for you, you should be very thankful.

That thought of being necessary to no one is part of your *weary burden*. You cannot truly see

the love which has led your friends to speak and act thus. Wait a little, do not writhe, lie still: do not say, "I am cut off from work, there is nothing left for me to do, no place to fill up:" if it be so at present it may not always be so. Do not lose the blessing of your present state in reaching after something either future or imaginary. Seek to find out what are your present duties: at least there are some. Do not ask to have your world enlarged; but fulfil your present duties; do your present work. You may help and be a great blessing to your attendant, even if you cannot speak much; if she sees you meek and patient, submissive to your trials, bearing pain patiently, receiving the various circumstances of life cheerfully, not murmuring or repining, she may learn a lesson which may sink deep into her heart, and bring forth fruit another day.

You have relative duties also; perhaps you have parents, or brothers, or sisters, or children in the house with you. The mere receiving them cheerfully, making them feel that they are always welcome, that you are ever ready to bear their burdens, and to sympathize with them, to share their joys as well as their sorrows, may make your sick room the "place of blessing" to all the household; the very house may be blessed for your sake: because the God who has thus linked you to the "prisoners and captives," can make "you and the places round you a blessing."⁴ In this busy, bustling world,

⁴ Ezek. xxxiv. 26.

many "seek some place of refreshment," where they may leave behind them the jarring of this life, and draw nearer to reality. Do not then say that you have no work; but lie still and let Him "work in you to will and to do of His good pleasure."⁵ Ask Him to make you so like unto Himself, that others may "take knowledge of you that you have been with Jesus."⁶ Seek continually to refresh yourself in Him, and then to water others, to "comfort them with the comfort wherewith you are comforted of God."⁷ You have a great work to do, to "deny yourself and worldly lusts,"⁸ and "to walk humbly with God."⁹ This work is "laudable, glorious, and honourable;" do not despise it, do not think scorn of it, lest in doing so you be "found replying against God;"¹ lest you tempt Him to withdraw it from you. Besides, even if it were true that you have nothing to do, no outward *work*, you have one stone at least in the Temple to polish and keep in its place: this time is given you in which to do it; look on it as a time of preparation for something, although you know not for what; it may be for life, or it may be for death. Do not pass it by; do not waste it in murmuring, or by crying out for some change. He who sees your heart, knows that it is *very* trying to you; and "He is very pitiful and of tender mercy,"² but He sees that you need just this very discipline, and He will give

⁵ Phil. ii. 13.⁸ Tit. ii. 12.⁶ Acts iv. 13.⁹ Mic. vi. 8.² James v. 11.⁷ 2 Cor. i. 4.¹ Rom. ix. 20.

you no other, until this has done the work for which He sent it.

At this very moment, many other persons are suffering, in mind, body, and estate, just as you are suffering. They have the same trials, the same temptations, though you know them not, and they know nothing of you; nor are you ever likely to meet until the day when "the secrets of all hearts shall be opened."³

How you suffer is very important to them, for you insensibly affect them, though you do not indeed exactly know *how*; but this you know, that every member of the Body is necessary to, and affects, the whole Body. Surely a realization of this truth would not only take away the loneliness of sickness, but would also prevent the feeling of life being a useless thing, and of trial and sickness being meant only for individual sanctification. "I believe in the communion of Saints," and so I am not alone, I cannot be; my trials are not mine alone; my conflicts and my temptations are those of some other member of Christ's Church. In fighting, I fight for them as well as for myself; in overcoming, weaken Satan's power over them, as well as over myself. "No temptation hath happened but such as is common to man."⁴ Surely no sick person should ever say, "*Mine* is the hardest of all trials to bear, the most difficult form of suffering." How can he tell, unless he had tried all? And be it the hardest, why then it is the most

³ 1 Cor. iv. 5.

⁴ 1 Cor. x. 13.

blessed for himself, and the most helpful for his sick and suffering brethren.

These thoughts truly realized would by degrees remove the feeling of isolation which is so common and so painful in sickness ;

"Who hath the Father and the Son,
May be left, but not alone."

if they would never end. *Years of suffering*; O how the heart sinks at those words! What, is there no prospect of diminution? Nay, rather of increase. It is in vain to say, "My soul is weary of my life;"³ "my soul chooseth death rather than my life; I loathe it; I would not live alway."⁴ *This* will not do; this will not lighten the "heavy burden" which you feel is "too grievous to be borne."

Yet do not say, "Hold your peace, let me alone, . . . let come on me what will."⁵ Do not say, "There is no hope;"⁶ for it is not so. Your present state is one full of trials, of temptations, of sorrow, and of much present darkness and uncertainty; but believe that it is full of blessings also—full of comforts, and mercies, and duties, and enjoyments; believe that though now it may seem to you as "one who mocks" that speaketh, that if you will "apply your heart to instruction, and" open "your ears to the words of knowledge,"⁷ the time is not far distant when you will see the "bow in the clouds," and learn who set it there, and perceive each day a "rainbow in every storm." For though now you "see not the bright light that there is in the clouds, yet the wind passeth over and cleanseth them."⁸ It will be to you as "the clear shining after rain."⁹ And what if the rain must come first? Fear not, the water-floods shall not drown you, for the Lord will be with you.

³ Job x. 1.

⁶ Isa. lvii. 10.

⁴ Job vii. 15, 16.

⁷ Prov. xxiii. 12.

⁹ 2 Sam. xxiii. 4.

⁵ Job xiii. 13.

⁸ Job xxxvii. 21.

You have often tried to think of the blessings of sickness apart from its trials. This cannot truly be done, because the blessings so much arise out of, or are connected with, the trials. You often think that the pain in itself would not be hard to bear; that the trial of it is, its interference, as you think, with your duties, and with the comforts of others. You may be sure that it does not interfere with your *duties*. What God calleth you to, that He gives you strength to meet. Not that you have the strength previously, or in yourself; but that if He calls you to any work, He gives the measure of strength required at the time, and for that thing.

However it may seem to interfere with the actual *comfort* of other people, yet they need the trial of your sickness as much as you do; and it will, in its measure, be as truly a blessing to them as to you. Leave all this to God; "trust also in Him, and He will bring it to pass."

II

**Sickness, a hidden state; Trials are to be
expected in it**

THE longer sickness is continued to any one, the more truly does he learn that sickness is a hidden state. Much even of that portion of your life, which in health would be seen and shared by

1 Ps. xxxvii. 5.

others, is from henceforth shut up ; shut out from all eyes, save of "Him who seeth in secret."² You will often have to learn that few persons understand your state at all ; that even those who earnestly desire to do so, make great mistakes, which often give you great and (as you are apt to think) needless pain. Perhaps, if you bear in mind your own previous ignorance of the state, how day by day hidden things are revealed to you, you will wonder less that others do not know the lengths, and breadths, and depths, and heights of your trial. Each one must pass through it to know the way, and to be enabled to point out the road, and its turnings and way-marks, to others. Beware, therefore, of expecting too much ; of taking it as a matter of course that every one sees and knows your trials, and ought to avoid adding to them. Do not be looking out for this kind of understanding ; do not expect to meet with it often ; and thus you will be spared much bitter disappointment and sorrow of heart.

Doubtless, if some of your trials were seen and known, your friends would try to remove them. How many blessings you would lose thereby ! O how these little pricks "reveal the thoughts of the heart !" You could not spare them ; do not wish them away, for "He doth not willingly afflict or grieve"³ you. He would therefore remove them, unless He saw that they were necessary for you. Do not say, "O ! but these trifles which are so

² Matt. vi. 6.

³ Lam. iii. 33.

much to me, and yet could be so easily removed, can do no good; they are too little to effect any thing; they do but produce vexation and stir up evil." Well, then, if they can produce so much evil, why cannot they produce an equal measure of good? Their very character of *trifles* it is, that makes them useful; they try you secretly, insignificantly, and yet sharply. Think of the crown of *thorns* borne for you. Did that cause no suffering? Yet, what are thorns?

It is no use hiding from yourself that you are from henceforth to be tried. Face it all; look fully at it; expect suffering; receive it as your daily portion; and when you say, "Give us this day our daily bread,"⁴ remember that you are asking for your daily portion of suffering: yet never forget also that you are asking for your daily portion of strength, which you will surely receive.

It is best to look upon sickness as a state wholly different to any that you have ever yet known; as involving a wholly different set of trials, temptations, duties, and blessings; as not to be judged of, or treated like a state of health. Look upon each little thing as a *trial*, *i.e.*, as meant to *try* you, to "humble you, and prove you, and show you what is in your heart, whether you will keep His commandments, or no."⁵

It is a painful thing truly to feel as in a cage; and it offers the constant temptation to beat your wings against the sides of it; but stay on the perch

⁴ Matt. vi. 11.

⁵ Deut. viii. 2.

quietly, and you will not feel the bondage and imprisonment of your cage. And after all, it is God who has shut you in; and therefore you are safe there, and there only.

You must not expect that sickness will ever become a pleasant thing, a state without great and manifold trials. But would you wish that this should be the case? What blessing could you expect from any state without trial? What could you learn from it? How would it liken you to your Master, who was made "perfect through suffering?"⁶ "Whom the Lord *loveth* He chasteneth;"⁷ would you wish, therefore, to be deprived of this token of His love? You will do well to resolve not to expect or desire *this*.

Face the whole trial; do not shrink from acknowledging to yourself that sickness is full of trial, and ever will be so, as long as it lasts; and that it is meant to be so, and that as soon as you get used to any portion, so that it ceases to *try*, it will cease to bless, and then the God of love will change it for some other form of discipline.

"He Himself went not up to joy, but first He suffered pain; He entered not into His glory before He was crucified. So truly our way to eternal joy is to suffer here with Christ; and our door to enter into eternal life is gladly to die with Christ, that we may rise again from death, and dwell with Him in everlasting life."⁸

⁶ Heb. ii. 10.

⁷ Heb. xii. 6.

⁸ Service for the Visitation of the Sick.

III

Twofold Character of Sickness

IF we look upon sickness as our own private property, and having reference only to ourselves, it becomes so. The lessons are then merely personal; and so are the blessings. We should never lose sight of the twofold character of sickness. It *is* personal; meant for individual profit, to make *thee* "a partaker of His holiness"⁹ who chastens thee. It is intended to make thee like thy LORD; to increase all graces in thee; to "add strength to thy faith and seriousness to thy repentance;"¹ to make that repentance real, and deep, and earnest, as never before; to mould thy will to GOD's will; to dissolve thee, until thou art lost in Him. It is for thy *correction*, punishment for past and present sin. It is to change the aspect of earth and of all creatures. To show them in their true character.—to show them in contrast with GOD; to show what *they* can do—and what HE can do for thee; their distance—His nearness; their incompetency—His completeness; their one-sided knowledge and judgment of thee—His perfect knowledge and inspection of thee.

Let this *personal* character of sickness never be lost sight of; for every sickness is a chastisement,

⁹ Heb. xii. 10.¹ Service for the Visitation of the Sick.

and it comes home into the very heart, saying, "Thou art the man."²

But the other view of it should never be forgotten. It is not for thyself alone, but for the whole Church; "The whole Church is fitly framed together by that which every joint supplieth."³ They who are well could not go on without those who are sick, any more than those who are sick could go on without those who are well. In many things they need them. They need to have this embodying of a large part of the life of our LORD ever before their eyes. They need to be reminded of death and of judgment. They need the ballast of suffering to keep them steady. They need to learn hereby that "man walketh in a vain show, that he is disquieted in vain."⁴ They need that what is kind and sympathizing and gentle in them should be drawn forth, and thus developed. They need to see life real and in earnest, with all its gloss stripped off; what it comes to; what they must come to. They need this voice to say to them, "Be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh."⁵

To show them all this is one office of sickness. If thus you look upon sickness as a work, a mission, one to which GOD has called you, although you seem called only to suffer, you will not look upon it as a lonesome lot.

² 2 Sam. xii. 7.

³ Eph. iv. 16.

⁴ Ps. xxxix. 6.

⁵ Matt. xxiv. 44.

IV

The Seeming Length of Sickness

“**A** LIFE-LONG sickness!” what a dreary thought! It seems as if it were said to be unending: yet “What is your life? It is even as a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away.”⁶ Medical men may speak of its lasting “an indefinite time,” for its length is undefined to them; but “with God are the issues of life and of death.” He will daily and hourly, yea, moment by moment, apportion to you your lot of suffering, and the strength to carry you through it. You have not to bear the whole length of your illness *now* at this time, but minute by minute; do not increase your present suffering, by adding to it the future burden. He knows how best to deal with you. Fear not, for “All these things are in His hand; and He lays them on, not all at once, but little by little, to prepare us for greater trials. We never have more than we can bear. The present hour we are always able to endure. As our day, so is our strength. If the trials of many years were gathered into one they would break us down; therefore, in pity to our little strength, He sends first one, then another, then removes both, and lays on a third, heavier, perhaps, than either; but all is so wisely measured to our strength, that

⁶ James iv. 14.

feeling of intense misery ; no one thinks it wrong to try and quench that thirst. But when all means fail, then how the spirit turns to God alone, and gives hearty thanks to Him who, when He was on the Cross, condescended to endure that suffering ! Then those two words, " I thirst,"³ have seemed inexpressibly gracious, and loving, and compassionate, and His power to sympathize has enabled the sufferer to lie still and bear his lesser woe.

They, who when they say, " I am very thirsty," can allay that thirst, or even try the means of doing so ; they, who when they are very hungry, have food to eat, and power to retain it, little know the exquisite tenderness of the loving-kindness of the Good Shepherd, who suffered hunger and thirst for them ; and who, though He calls them to pass through these dry places, bears them in His arms, and carries them in His bosom, and makes them to see a fulness of meaning in the Gospels, which they could never have seen otherwise, especially in His feeding so many thousands with scarcely any bread. It is no light matter to them, that in three times in the year, the Church, in the Gospels appointed for the Sundays, calls them to consider this miracle of our Lord.

The various forms of illness seem meant each to teach us their own separate lesson. " Whoso is wise, and will observe these things, even he shall understand the loving-kindness of the Lord."⁴ All those diseases which deprive people of some sense

³ John xix. 28.

⁴ Ps. cvii. 43.

or power, speak each with their own voice, that God gave sight and hearing, and the power of walking and acting.

Consumption seems to say, perhaps with a louder voice than all the rest, "The Almighty God is the Lord of life and death, and of all things to them pertaining." Those diseases which attack the digestive organs, and which either prevent the taking, or the retaining of food, say, that what we call common mercies are the good gifts of God, not once for all, but daily and hourly renewed; that we think it a common mercy (if we regard it as a mercy at all) to be able to take food, and having taken it, to be nourished by it, and suffer no inconvenience from it. We think it a strange thing if it be otherwise with us—an accident to be speedily got rid of. O! how many days, and months, and years, we have taken daily meals without looking at each one and all that belonged to it, as a present and daily-renewed mercy from our ever watchful Lord, who "knoweth whereof we are made."⁵

VI

Sickness a Vocation

SICKNESS for the present is the "state of life into which it hath pleased God to call you." Your *calling*, your "vocation." As such you will

⁵ Ps. ciii. 14.

feel it "very good." You will feel also that no state can be good excepting that to which He calls you; and you will desire to have no choice whether to live or die, to remain in your present state, or to recover your bodily health.

Whatever is clearly your work, your *calling*, that do; and be sure that we have no "hard Master, reaping where He has not sown, and gathering where He has not strawed."⁶

He will give you strength for each thing that He calls you to. But you must ever remember that it is what He *calls* you to, and not in any self-chosen path, that you can look for the power to perform. This is your work now. Do not think scorn of it. Do not lightly esteem it. The work requires great patience, great faith, great love, great submission. Say then, has He not honoured you by trusting it to you?

Do you ask how you can "show forth His praise," if you cannot stir hand or foot, and can scarcely think? The answer will give you work enough, for it will require a vigorous, earnest, daily, hourly conflict; "a sharp rule over yourself, your tempers," your most easily-besetting sins: truly a "fight of faith," which you cannot fight unless you "take unto yourself the whole armour of God."⁷

In some minds there is a great impatience of the bonds of sickness, and an inordinate desire for recovering, which must be brought into subjection, and be yielded wholly to the will of God. There

⁶ Matt. xxv. 24.

⁷ Eph. vi. 13.

are such a variety of characters and dispositions, that each one needs a different discipline.

Some learn more quickly in the school of sickness than others. Some take great pains to learn—they are never content with present progress—they are ever seeking to know more, to practise more, to rise higher. This requires great self-discipline, constant watchfulness; for the birds of the air are constantly trying to get the good seed, and often the sun is very scorching, and if they do not seek for the only dew which can moisten the ground, it becomes very hard, or the seed withers away.

Beware how you ever look upon yourself as *cut off* from life and from enjoyment; you are not cut off, only taken apart, laid aside, it may be but for a season, or it may be for life; but still you are part of the Body of which Christ is the Head.

Some must suffer and some must serve, but each one is necessary to the other, "the whole body is fitly framed together by that which every joint supplieth,"⁸ "the eye cannot say to the hand, I have no need of thee: nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you."⁹ Your feet may be set fast; they may have run with great activity, and you sorrow now, because they can run no more. But do not sorrow thus, do not envy those who are running; you have a work to do; it may be the work of the head, or of the eye, it surely is whatever work God gives to you. It may be the work of lying still, of not stirring hand or foot, of scarcely speaking,

⁸ Eph. iv. 16.

⁹ 1 Cor. xii. 21.

for recovery, or almost fearful lest you should recover, eager and impatient to depart.

You were surely right to pray, and that earnestly, that if it were the holy will of God, you might recover your bodily health; for health is a most precious gift, full of blessings, and duties, and responsibilities, and sorrows, and enjoyments. Besides, life is a wonderful and blessed gift from God, and we ought to "love life," and heartily to give thanks for our "creation and preservation, and all the blessings of this life." Perhaps your temptation has been *not* to do so—to be careless of life and health—to see no brightness and blessing in it, only a wearisome burden which you *must* bear. You may have found it a hard thing to join in the thanksgiving for either creation or preservation. At times you have, with a sinful longing, wished your days here on earth were ended. You have hoped and believed that you were ready to depart, or at least you felt that God could make you so at any moment. Instead of "seeing good days," your "years" have been those in which you said, "I have no pleasure in them."⁷ You have dragged on a weary load of discontent with life, and have envied each one who was "taken from the evil to come." You thought that you wished to "depart and be with Christ; which is far better;"⁸ but were you not more anxious to get away from trouble, and sorrow, and sighing? How often you have said, "O that I had wings like a dove! for

⁷ Eccles. xii. 1.

⁸ Phil. i. 23.

then would I fly away, and be at rest."⁹ You *would* not enjoy life, you refused to do it. You had much to make it sweet and pleasant to you; but you *would* not see the bright things, and thought that there was nothing but darkness all around. You thought that you, at least, were not dealt with lovingly—that all your "pleasant pictures"¹ were broken; all that you loved best on earth, the closest and the dearest ties severed, and yet you were called to live. You could not say from your heart, "God is love," love to *me*. You thought that He dealt hardly with you. If you were ill, you impatiently watched your symptoms, hoping that each one was fatal. You were angry when friends said that you were better, and yet more angry if any medical man said so; nevertheless, you believed that they did not know and understand, for you were *resolved* to die! and yet compelled to live. O how your spirit was chafed and fretted because of what *seemed* to you such an unreasonable delay, such a long waiting here below! You have often perhaps prayed for work, and yet, when you have had it given you to do, it has not seemed enough for your desires or capacities; or not the kind suited to you; and so your spirit has never been at rest, it has been feeling after something which it has never found.

⁹ Ps. lv. 6.¹ Isa. ii. 16.

PART II

TRIALS AND TEMPTATIONS OF SICKNESS



Personal Trials

I

Pain

IT is a question often asked, Which is the hardest to bear, pain or weakness? Some sick persons speak of one as much easier to bear than the other. They are, perhaps, in a long illness almost inseparable, and so blended that it is scarcely possible to say which suffering is to be classed under each head. There are pains quite distinct from weakness; and weakness is perhaps not always accompanied by pain. Those words, "nothing is left but weakness," "it is mere weakness," are as hopeless as any that can be uttered in a long and weary illness. No matter whether there is any cause for the weakness or not, the trial of it is the same.

Some people are endowed with much more natural courage and fortitude than others; to them it is not so difficult to bear acute pain, if it be but for a season; but when it is to be long drawn out, then it requires great patience; and patience and forti-

tude are not always combined. There is a peculiar character in severe pain when it is first brought home to us. It seems to bring all the sins of our lives before us, and to "speak to us with a piercing emphasis." It seems to "take away all the imaginative and visionary parts of our life, and to turn them all into an impressive reality." "The iron enters into our soul."¹ We cannot understand it; the nature of pain is quite incomprehensible, its offices are hidden from us; we know nothing of its course, how then can we know its nature and objects? Yet "if we ponder on the incomprehensible nature of pain, mental and bodily; of its invisibleness, its vividness, its exceeding sharpness and penetrating omnipresence in our whole being, of its inscrutable origin, and the indissoluble link which binds it to sin; and lastly, its mysterious relation to the passion and perfection of our Lord,—we shall see reason to believe that a power so near and awful has many energies, and fulfils many designs in God's kingdom, secret from us."

Some pains are very much more difficult to bear than others; those especially which affect the head, and prevent all mental application. Also some internal pains are of exquisite sharpness, and in many ways involve peculiar trial to those who suffer from them. The consciousness that certain diseases are absolutely loathsome—that it requires an effort of love or duty to give the necessary attendance on them, involving, as they do, trials inexpressible and

¹ Ps. cv. 18.

inconceivable, so that life is made up of mere endurance. These, and many other illnesses, such as constant sickness, and inability to retain food, in a peculiar manner teach us that these are "bodies of humiliation," and make us to understand something of the wonderful meaning and blessing of the promise, "He shall change our vile body, and fashion it like unto His glorious body, according to the working wherewith He is able even to subdue all things unto Himself."²

There is a large class of pains which gain but little sympathy, and yet which cause great suffering to those who have them to bear. It may be some little thing, but which admits of no remedy; it may be some hidden thing, which medical men can neither explain nor remove, but which may as effectually scourge the sufferer as any knotted cord could do. We may call it an inglorious pain, because the bearing of it brings no honour, no credit. The pain goes on, there is no abatement; years pass on, and still it is there, as fresh to you in its trial and suffering as when it first began; but the novelty has passed; the vigorous efforts of fortitude are over: it wears you day by day; friends have mostly forgotten it; at times, some one asks whether you still suffer from it, and you feel that it is very kind of them to remember it; but for the most part the tale of your suffering is forgotten, and you must bear it alone, as far as man is concerned. You have spoken to many physicians. Some see nothing in

² Phil. iii. 21.

another. Even the sick often misunderstand each other about it, and fancy that because they can do certain things, therefore every one else can. This is a very great mistake, for weakness affects people in very different ways, differing according to the disease and constitution. One, may not be able to leave his bed ; another, may not be at all less really ill, yet may be able to go about the house, to bear a drive, perhaps even a short walk ; another, may be unable to bear to see even a friend, or to talk at all, and yet perhaps may be able to get up and dress ; another, may be unable to talk ; another, to write at all ; another, to read or use the mind in any way, without the most painful results. One, may be able to bear a great deal of noise ; another, none at all ; and the utmost irritation of nerve and mind may be produced by noises in the house or the street, a door slammed, a loud tone of voice, or even the merry voice of a happy child. One, may like to have a light room because it is cheerful ; another, may not be able to bear any light. One, may be unable to hear a voice reading aloud ; another, may enjoy it, and find it very soothing : to one, the effort of attention may be impossible ; to another, it may be an easier thing than to read to himself, or to converse : yet in reality one may not be more ill than another ; only weakness shows itself in very different ways. Therefore "judge ye not, that ye be not judged ;"² but leave it all to Him who is a "righteous judge, strong and patient."³

² Matt. vii. 1.³ Ps. vii. 12.

It is quite certain, that of the many forms of trial and temptation presented by weakness, each one ought to be resisted earnestly, but quietly, or they will increase greatly, and would then be all but impossible to overcome. If noise tries you, remember that by yielding to your distress at it, and getting friends to remove every cause of it, so far as it is possible, you put yourself more into a position of minding it. If, instead of having every one come into your room, or walk about the house, in slippers, you try to use yourself to their natural step, it will save them from much annoyance; and if you are resolved to bear it, by degrees you will find that you mind it less and less. If when children come into your room you always hush them, you deprive them of much pleasure in coming to see you, make their visits constrained and irksome, and deprive yourself of the enjoyment of their merry ways, and all their freedom of love and play; and you give them the impression, perhaps for life, that a sick room is a very melancholy place, to be shunned, and only visited from necessity. You little know the effect that this impression may have on them for evil, or the contrary impression for good. For the sake of the children, they should be reminded that in a sick room they must be quieter than elsewhere; they should not be allowed to be boisterous, but be early taught to consider the "sick and the needy."⁴

For your own sake, never indulge yourself about

⁴ Ps. xli. 1.

noise, or light, or any other thing; the power of bearing increases with habit, and by resolution. But, if the temptation is yielded to, the power (or the supposed capability) diminishes, until at last you would become really incapable of bearing almost anything. The outdoor noises you can never get rid of, and they are the most difficult of any to get used to; in certain states they never cease to distress, and seem each day to become more painful and intolerable. The only remedy is to say, "I am placed here by God. Here is my work. If I try to escape from it, I shall sin against God. It is meant for my trial. He, I know, will help me to bear it, minute by minute; and for the rest, *It is the will of God.*"

There are states of physical suffering, in which noise and light must, as far as possible, be shut out for a season; but they are the exceptions, and we are speaking of ordinary cases. In every way, the fewer invalid habits you have, the better it will be for your health and happiness, and that of all about you. They grow so fast upon sick people, that they should be earnestly resisted in their earliest stage. Sick people should try to count as few things *necessary* as possible, and deny themselves in little things, so that selfishness may not grow upon them faster than at other times.

Yes, truly, you have a fight to maintain, in order not to become morbid, and selfish, and indifferent to all around. You feel oftentimes as if you were shut up to suffering; you have a constant burden

of languor and pain to bear, your mind is weakened, you feel it so difficult to fix your thoughts at all; you try to do so; the effort seems to increase your difficulty. All things seem to you to be flitting. You try to think; you take a subject, but soon, alas! you say, What was I thinking of? my thoughts are gone! Do not try to gather them up: "as water spilled on the ground,"⁵ so are they. Do not distress yourself, it is part of your disease; you must be passive now, and let Him work. Ask Him to "put into your mind good desires;"⁶ it is only by "His holy inspiration that we think those things that be good."⁷ Lie still; and, if we may say it reverently, let Him think in you.

Perhaps you are tried by being able to remember bad things but too easily, although the better things depart from you. Perhaps they may be things which you have heard years ago, heard accidentally, which you would not for the world have heard or known; or things which you think so bad, that you could not have heard them. Yet now in your weakness these things start up, and tease, and haunt you, and make you think yourself given over to Satan to be tempted. This is indeed a very sore trial, but a very common one. That Satan does take advantage of our weakness, there can be no doubt; but there is One stronger than he, who will not suffer us to be "tempted above that we are able; but will with every temptation make a way

⁵ 2 Sam. xiv. 14.

⁶ Collect for Easter Day.

⁷ Collect for Fifth Sunday after Easter.

for our escape.”⁸ He who was tempted of Satan knows your sorrow. He was not only tempted by, but overcame, the devil. He overcame him for you. The devil “shall not have dominion over you;”⁹ but do not take the matter into your own hands; do not parley with the tempter, or he will tempt you further. Say at once, “Get thee behind me, Satan: for thou savourest not of the things of God.”¹ Do not listen to him, go on crying to your Father, as if no voices were spoken into your ears; and if still they drown “the voice of your petition,” cry “the more earnestly.”² He who wrestled with Satan was in an agony. Your agony can never be so great; but you may well cry out, “By Thine agony and bloody sweat, good Lord, deliver me.” He is very near to you, pitying and strengthening you. Do not argue at all with yourself or Satan; do not analyze your thoughts; do not say, Where could I have heard this? There is no safety in doing so; only do not seem to heed, but go on calling upon the Lord. The trial may often return. Do not suppose that, when it seems to be overcome, it will assault you no more. But its power will surely weaken, if you treat it thus, until at last the enemy will depart, not for a season only; but finding that point well guarded, will find some other place of attack. Do not torment yourself with thinking how much worse and more wicked you must be than formerly. This is no proof. If

⁸ 1 Cor. x. 13.

¹ Mark viii. 33.

⁹ Rom. vi. 14.

² Luke xxi. 44.

Satan could offer evil suggestions to our Lord, "Is the disciple above his master, and the servant above his lord?"³ But do not dwell on it; in your weak state it will but increase the evil; if you resist it instantly, it does not become *sin*, but only a bitter trial; if you harbour it, and revolve the thoughts (more than your weakness surely will do), you then turn it into sin; otherwise you may meet the trial with the only safe words to meet all trials, "*It is the will of God.*"

In like manner seek to resist all the evil thoughts which offer themselves to you; they will come down upon you in the form of irritability, of impatience, of discontent, of murmuring, of inordinate craving for sympathy, of fearfulness, of the hopelessness of unending suffering, of isolation. These are hard trials to bear, especially as they often receive not only no pity from others, but even aggravation; not from unkindness, but from ignorance and thoughtlessness.

It is against these "fiery darts of the wicked,"⁴ that in weakness it is so peculiarly difficult to hold up "the shield of faith," which can alone keep them from entering into the soul.

Another trial in weakness is the difficulty of saying the right word, the word that you intend; you know perfectly *what* word you would say, and know that you say another not meaning the same thing; you ask to have a thing given you which is quite different from what you want, or you say just what

³ Matt. x. 24.

⁴ Eph. vi. 16.

you do not intend, and so do not get the thing which you want.

This is very trying, but it is mere physical weakness. Do not be distressed or tormented by it, it will pass away when you get stronger, in the mean time bear it as a humiliation, and instead of being fretted by it, say, "*It is the will of God.*"

Even as one can know nothing of a foreign country unless one has either been there or has read with care descriptions of it, and tried to realize them; so no one who has not had sickness themselves, or carefully watched those who are sick, can have any idea of the real state of things. Friends do not see that after one of their visits, which for the time you may have enjoyed, you lie down quite exhausted, and, for it may be an hour or longer, you can do nothing, neither read nor think. Then perhaps you take up a book; in a little while exhaustion overtakes you again, and thus you spend your days; every exertion calling for seasons of rest; and your time not only all broken, but never to be reckoned on, for your strength varies from day to day; and sometimes the whole day is spent in a state little removed from unconsciousness, if that means incapability of understanding, for you are deeply conscious of wearing languor, and exhaustion quite unutterable. Or, your time may be spent in merely bearing pain, in using the necessary remedies, and in resting afterwards; or, it may be that you are feverish and restless, and need, as the only real remedy, to lie perfectly still, without

moving or doing anything ; or some particular pain or suffering of the brain may be increased by every employment, and you are necessarily doomed to idleness for most part of the day. Besides this, your time is dependent on others. Persons in health, if they wish to be alone, can go out and walk, or go into another room ; but you cannot. Where you are, there you must remain, and must be subject to persons coming in, and staying as long as they like. However indisposed you may be for interruption in what you may be doing, you must receive it as your present discipline, and not discourage your friend, lest another time he should feel that he was in the way before, and so not come at all. This being at the mercy of others ; inability to shut any out, or even to lock the door for himself, are great and constant trials to sick people. You may have abundance of spare time, but the power to work may rarely be given you ; and even when it seems to be, or when by resolution you endeavour to rise above your weakness, then the heart only knows the suffering that it costs ; the painful effort at the time ; the exceeding distress which follows ; the extreme discouragement ; and the sense of annihilation of mind ; the very life of the body seeming to consist in its misery and helplessness and suffering ; and then every nerve seems strung up to suffering, and you seem to know where every nerve is, by its calling out to you in a voice of anguish. You hear some footstep on the stairs, and earnestly hope that at least no one is coming

near to you ; you feel that you must speak unkindly to any one who comes ; you have just time to cry out, " Lord, help me," " Have mercy upon me, O Lord ; for I am weak,"⁵ when some one enters your room. Well, do not fear ; go on saying those words in your own heart, you surely *will* be helped, you " shall not be confounded."⁶ Your friend leaves you ; you have, thanks be to God, been enabled to avoid expressing your suffering, but you think that your tone or manner manifested it. You feel that even if you did avoid *saying* any thing which might be sinful, that it was in your heart ; you feel crushed and desponding, for you know that the utmost irritability and impatience were there. That physical nervous irritability, unutterable in its extent, causes you a continual and bitter conflict to subdue even the outward appearance of it. To " rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for Him,"⁷ is the only thing for you to do.

Though at one time you may greatly dread to hear the sound of footsteps, at another, your trial may be, that you have been lying alone for a long time. Very sad thoughts have been gathering around and within ; you have said, " I am forgotten, as a dead man out of mind."⁸ Perhaps you may have been thinking of your loneliness, of your life-long illness (as you suppose it to be), of your inability to do the many things that you long to do ; of the future, all dark and dreary ; of friends who are

⁵ Ps. vi. 2.

⁷ Ps. xxxvii. 7.

⁶ 1 Pet. ii. 6.

⁸ Ps. xxxi. 12.

gone into the world unseen, who could have understood you, and would have sympathized with you, and not left you so lonesome and comfortless ; then you fancy that you are a trouble to all around ; a burden, a mere cypher, except for the trouble you give ; you go on perhaps to fancy that they do not love you, and you feel isolated, and sad, and lonely, and say, " Lord, how long."⁹

Presently some one comes to you ; perhaps it is one of the family, just looked in to say some kind word, to bring you a book that they think may interest you ; or a letter, or a flower, or a message from some friend ; perhaps it is only the oft uncared-for message of love—" So-and-so sends her love to you." It is enough ; the whole current of your thoughts is changed ; you see how foolishly you have charged your friends, that the isolation and want of love was in *you*, not in them ; and so you feel cheered and braced to go on your way afresh. Sometimes even a servant coming into the room on some errand will be sufficient to divert the thoughts into another channel. Yes ; could your friends really read your thoughts, and see the change in them, what pains they would take to give you messages, however trifling, that you may know that you are remembered, and still " preserved in the unity of the Church !"¹⁰ How anxiously they would watch to bring you little trifles that may give you pleasure ! they would feel, too, that when they visit you, *they* should introduce the subjects of con-

⁹ Ps. vi. 3.

¹⁰ Service for the Visitation of the Sick.

versation generally, because you need to have the current of your thoughts often changed, and because you have so painful a sense of weakness, that, besides the effort to rouse yourself to exertion, you feel as if you could suggest nothing. Never forget that there is One who knows all your weakness. "He knoweth your frame; and remembereth that you are dust."¹ Be sure that when you cry, "Have mercy upon me, O Lord; for I am weak,"² you will never cry in vain, but will always have reason to say, "I am poor and needy; yet the Lord thinketh upon me."³

III

Loss of the Powers of Mind

THE Church has classed together "age, weakness, and sickness."⁴ The trials which they bring are in many respects the same. In how many points that beautiful description of age in Ecclesiastes⁵ applies to your state! The years are *come*, they no longer "draw nigh," in which you shall say, "I have no pleasure in them." "The sun, or the light, or the moon, or the stars," seem darkened to you, they have lost their brightness and gladness. "The clouds return after the rain," they but gather again when they seem to have dispersed. As yet

¹ Ps. ciii. 14.

² Ps. vi. 2.

³ Ps. xl. 17.

⁴ Service for the Visitation of the Sick.

⁵ Eccles. xii.

you "see not the bright light that there is in"⁶ them. "The keepers of the house tremble, and the strong men bow themselves," and "those that look out of the windows are darkened." Your judgment is strangely weakened. Perhaps you used almost to pride yourself on the rapidity with which you came to a decision on all subjects that came before you; now, how slowly and unwillingly you decide! One moment the point seems settled—and the next, a host of fears overturn, or at least shake it. Then you, who used to scorn to ask for help in deciding little things, or even great, turn to other people to help you, or rather to decide for you; they do not see, or seem to you to see, the whole of the question, and all its bearings. You are dissatisfied; that decision will not do to act upon; you must decide for yourself, deeply conscious that your own clear sight is confused and darkened; that you have lost the power of balancing things. Then, when you have decided, when any step has been taken, O what misgivings follow!—"Perhaps I did wrong; I think it would have been better to have decided thus or thus. Is it too late to change?" Perhaps you find it is; never mind, our first thoughts are often the truest; and when we have indulged in second thoughts we often find them erroneous, and return to our first thoughts. The truth is, your judgment is not to be trusted just now, it must share in the general weakness; but be sure of this, that if you commit it and your-

⁶ Job xxxvii. 21.

self to "Him who judges righteously,"⁷ He will surely "teach you the way in which you should go."⁸ "The meek will He guide in judgment, and such as are gentle shall learn His way."⁹ If you trust Him to decide, you will not go wrong; and the less you refine about it, and turn and return ~~all~~ the circumstances of the case, the better. It is often seen, that those who are in sickness, and the most deeply conscious of their own failure of power, and of the slowness of their judgment and perception, are the very people who are the most to be trusted for counsel, advice, or decisions; because they go wholly out of themselves, mistrusting themselves entirely, and look unto "the Counsellor" for every thing, and speak His words rather than their own. To them there seems to be a heavenly instinct given, so that it is evident that "the secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him."² Do not mourn the loss of any thing which was merely your own, or which you used to fancy was such. "God has provided some better thing for you."³ Receive His gifts thankfully, and He will give them to you richly.

What has been said above of judgment, may be said of memory also. Do not think your trial peculiar, if you find, as the saying is, that you have "lost your memory." The failure of memory is one of the sure accompaniments of weakness; it depends mainly on the state of the health, and will probably

⁷ Jer. xi. 20.⁸ Ps. xxxii. 8.⁹ Ps. xxv. 9.¹ Isa. ix. 6.² Ps. xxv. 14.³ Heb. xi. 40.

by slow degrees return, and regain its power, if you recover your strength. It varies, too, even in weakness, from day to day, often merely from the state of the stomach or nerves. It fails in very different manners and degrees. Some persons will lose all power of remembering little things belonging to daily life; their minds will be tormented by being asked to remember any thing, or to remind another person of it. Others, will lose all memory of names or dates; whilst others will have a fidgety exactness of memory in those points, and will be, perhaps, very much fretted if other people do not remember things as they do, and as minutely and particularly. Others, cannot remember any thing that they read, however deeply it interests them. To some, the remembrance of a fact in history, or life, however well known formerly, is quite an impossibility. Others, will lose all verbal memory—they could scarcely even repeat words after another person. Others, may have stores of poetry in their minds, which now they cannot touch or lay hold of. In some cases there will be many of these things occurring together. Some people are especially tried by inability to repeat, or remember correctly, any words of Scripture, or the Services of the Church, with which they are so familiar. Sometimes they could not finish a Collect which another person began to repeat. This is very trying; and the more so because “Satan would get an advantage of us”⁴ thereby, and try to persuade the sufferer that

⁴ 2 Cor. ii. 11.

it proves a much lessened value for these things. The remedies for this trial are :—

1. Not to burden your memory at all in any little things, but to write them down ; to do this with *all* little things and with messages ; never to try to remember them, but to keep the mind free and unfettered for better recollections.

2. Never strain the memory, or task it much or long ; be as content now with one sentence, as you might formerly have been with many pages.

3. Try and learn some little verse from the Scriptures, or poetry, each day—just enough to keep the memory a little exercised ; for the habit of forgetting grows apace.

4. Think as little as possible about it ; try, as far as you can, to act and speak as you used to do, without prefacing your words or thoughts with how you have lost your memory.

5. When you feel the loss very much, do not worry yourself by lamenting it—that will increase the evil.

6. Remember always who has sent you the trial ; that He knows it belongs to your weakness, and how trying it is ; that He judges you with “just judgment,” and does not think you love His holy word the less, because you cannot say it correctly, and have forgotten so much of it. It is very humbling certainly ; you cannot appear as you feel that you deserve to do to your friends ; you cannot enter into conversation with the same pleasure to yourself, if to others ; you feel that you are a wreck


of your former self and mind. All this He sees, and knows, and feels ; He sees that this trial is necessary, or He would not have sent it ; He will fulfil His promise, that the "Holy Ghost will bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever He hath spoken unto you."⁵ Be sure that nothing shall be lost. Whatever you want, "for doctrine, for reproof, for instruction, so that you may be edified thereby,"⁶ *that* will be brought to your mind, and taught to you. So that often they who feel the most that memory is failing, seem to learn the most freshly and vividly, truths which they perhaps knew before but have forgotten ; now they come out afresh, and with a depth, and earnestness, and meaning never perceived before. God Himself is teaching them. Sometimes indeed a truth will come out with startling clearness, and we feel that we have so received it that we can never forget it ; an hour after we cannot even remember what the subject of it was ; we make efforts to pursue and overtake it, but in vain. It is not really *gone* ; it is only sunk into our hearts, become a part of ourselves, laid up safely by Him who taught it to us, He will know where it is, and where to direct us to it, when we need it again. Let us "commit the keeping" of our memories, as well as our souls, to Him "as unto a faithful Creator ;"⁷ and as often as the sad thought of want of memory returns, say "*It is the will of God ;*" that alone can silence your murmurings.

⁵ John xiv. 26.⁶ 2 Tim. iii. 16, 17.⁷ 1 Pet. iv. 19

You have a painfully morbid sense of being unable to converse ; you feel either that you have subjects apart from all others, or else, that from illness and loneliness, you have lost the power to think and converse and understand ; that you can give no pleasure by what you say, and shall but betray the exceeding feebleness of your mind, which you so painfully feel is but the wreck of what it once was.

When you *hear* conversation, if it is not addressed to you especially, you feel, " This is quite beyond me. O with what deep interest I used to enter into these subjects ! I used to understand them ; but they seem now as if they were spoken in a foreign language, of which I have scarcely any knowledge. I cannot follow it all ; I should but make strange blunders if I joined in it ; and if any one asked me what had been the subject, I could but vaguely tell ; and yet I used to be so familiar with it ! "

This is a peculiarly distressing feeling ; and the more it is indulged in and thought of, the stronger it becomes ; until, at last, you get to fancy that you cannot even understand the *words*, and that children's books and talk are all you can attain unto. Yet do not say to your friends that you cannot understand them, and especially not in a murmuring fretful tone ; let them go on, you will be sure to glean something from their conversation if you are patient, and not inwardly abstracting yourself, because you cannot bear the supposed humiliation. *The best way is at first, when these thoughts arise,*



to say at once, "Well, be it so : I will just listen, and join in the conversation whenever I can. *Something* I can understand ; and for the rest, if my mind is so gone, who has taken it away ? In murmuring, whom am I replying against ? *It is the will of God.*"

The same applies to reading aloud. If you are asked by any friend whether you should like to hear reading, you can answer according to your wishes and feeling of ability ; but if you are well enough in any degree to join with the family, and *they* are reading some book, do not ask them to change it, or not to read, merely because you have this feeling of inability to understand, or because a continuous voice annoys you, and prevents all power of attention (which to some sick people is always the case with reading aloud) ; enter with cheerfulness and willingness into their pleasure, and tell your pain only to Him who sees your heart. Then you will surely have gained by it yourself, in patience, and humility, and charity. Take every opportunity of trying to overcome the great difficulty which you feel in taking an interest in other people's concerns, and the things which interest them. It is a trial common to sickness, but should be earnestly resisted, and may be wonderfully overcome.


IV

The Fearness of Life

WHEN first the nearness of life, and yet its unapproachableness, is realized, it is a sore trial.

The sick person vainly hopes to become used to it ; but be not deceived, it will not lessen. One day you may fancy that you have got used to it ; some little thing may arise which may reveal the whole sad truth, and you find yourself just where you were. You say, "There is but a step between me and life ;" but O that step ! how can it be taken ? A few boards separate you from the family. You hear their voices, you hear their laughter, at times you catch words. Then family prayers begin : once you did not value them ; now, how gladly would you hear them, but those few boards shut out all but the occasional sound of a word. Some one is added to the family party (just as you begin to fancy that you are reconciled to your circumstances), this person is more to you than to them ; the tones ascend, but that is all ; perhaps you will not even meet, at any rate you will lose much of their company.

Or, perhaps, for a time you have been removed to the house of some friend ; you long very much to share in all their employments and pleasures ; you faintly, dimly *hear* what goes on, but from the



sight and enjoyment of all you are shut out ; their daily life is shut out from you ; you share it only in their occasional—perhaps, rare, visits to you : you have here a new lesson to learn, for nothing so effectually tempts and tries a sick person. Truly this is a trial : to seem to be separated from our brethren, is apt to lead us into most untrue and hard thoughts of them. When you hear the bell ring to call the family together for some meal, you long to be there, and think how much you are hereby deprived of their company ; how much better you should know them ; how much conversation you lose ; how many things you should like to hear, and to ask, and to say !

Bear it always in mind that you are now by the will of God brought into a different state from them, or from your former state ; called to new duties and responsibilities, and comforts, and blessings, and trials, and temptations : who called you ?—It is God's *visitation*.

V

Longings

MANY desires for that which you have not, or cannot have, often arise in your mind ; sometimes they are very painful to you. You feel that they are wrong, and resist them : but again, at another time, you feel as if they ought to be accom-

plished for you, as if your friends should strive to gratify you : you think that they must know them, that they must realize how great a pleasure this or that would be to you. Ask yourself whether this is reasonable? To take an instance. The longing for the relief afforded even by crossing the room, they surely cannot be expected to understand, who can move when, and as they will,—scarcely seeming to need to will it. Fully to understand this, one must have spent many weary months in the same position. It is not love of change that causes it ; there is a peculiar relief produced by it, the very movement through the air seems to change the thoughts, and throw off some sad feelings which are very hard to shake off when circumstances are unchanged ; for they seem to settle down and fasten upon the poor weak body, and then to press on the weakened mind, for “the corruptible presseth down the mind that museth on many things.”⁸ You see life shut in by four walls, each wall having its own peculiar pictures belonging to it. Do not expect those to see them whose eyes have never painted them,—neither the pictures, nor their black frames will be visible to their eyes ; do not expect it, it is unreasonable. The bright lights of nature will perhaps never brighten those pictures to you ; but there is a brighter light that can illuminate them all, and change them all into “pleasant pictures.” Neither count your friends selfish if they cannot understand your deep and irrepressible longing to

⁸ *Wisd. ix. 15.*

look once more on all the things in which you have so intensely delighted. You may be burning with a wasting desire just to see a field, a "deep wood," or even a few trees, a wheat-field, a meadow with cattle grazing, a river, or flowers growing. You may repress it entirely to all appearance ; you may never express it, there may be even a mournful submission ; a sense that it is all right, and yet at times the pain may be intense. It may suddenly seize you, and seem as if you had no strength to grapple with it ; you *must* go, happen what may. You think you can settle to nothing, until your desire is granted. You mention it to a friend ; it is treated first perhaps as mere nonsense, and you are counted very foolish for wishing for impossibilities—very unsubdued, for desiring any thing that you cannot have. You say in your heart (thank God if you do not say any reproachful words aloud), "How selfish it is of those who have all these enjoyments not in the least to enter into my desire, and only to throw it back on me !" You shrink into yourself, and speak the wish no more. But there it is ; there it burns, and well-nigh consumes you. No one who has not experienced it can tell the trial of these desires, or the sudden way in which they will seize hold of a sick person. One moment he may think that he is quite used to his lot ; the next, a desire may shoot across his heart, which may show how far this is from being attained. Yet be not discouraged ; these are but temptations : if rightly treated, they may never pass into sin, but rather, by

desire is unsatisfied, the fulfilment of which would have given you a start into life and health. Or you may feel at any season of the year, that if you could only be taken to the seaside, you should get well. It may be impossible ; circumstances may make it so, or Medical men may forbid. Lie still then, and remember that there is a Friend to whom "the secrets of all hearts are opened, and from Him no desire is hid." He sees therefore your desire. "He will fulfil" it, if it be for your real good ; "for He is the ruler and governor." His "never-failing providence ordereth all things, both in heaven and earth." Ask Him to "put away from you all hurtful things," whether they be thoughts, or desires, or impulses, and to "give you those things which be profitable." He will surely do this for you ; for He is the "Lord of all power and might." Only do not expect Him to fulfil your desires always in the way you think you would be best. Leave it all to Him, who says, "Be still, and know that I am God."⁴

VI

Circumstances

DO not seek to choose or to change your circumstances—they are the best, the very best for you. "The only wise God"⁵ has chosen

⁴ Ps. xlv. 10.

⁵ 1 Tim. i. 17.

for you, and that in true love ; for " the Lord
y pitiful, and of tender mercy." ⁶

ither seek to change the characters of those
you ; for you are set amidst them for your
line and correction.

is by no accident that those particular char-
are brought into contact with you—your
r placed them there. Their foibles, defi-
es, and mistakes are all for your profit. They
eant to supply the discipline which is gained
iety, by those in health. Many of the things
try us, are meant most kindly. Always try
lieve this, and receive each thing as such,
; there be plain proof to the contrary. Is it
ill of your heavenly Father that you should be
up in a town, when your whole heart revels in
ry enjoyments? Does the feeling of the de-
ion seem to deepen each day, instead of your
ing habituated to it? Are you tempted to
pon it as wholly precluding you from recovery?
the endless noise seem to stir up all the im-
ce and restlessness that is in you? Does it
to come between your very soul and God?
our eyes rest for ever on the same dark dead
s? Oh, how you long to see green trees and
once more ! how your heart longs for still-
und feels mournfully that these blessings are
ay !

ask yourself, who placed you in the town?
u say " circumstances?" Who rules circum-

⁶ James v. 11.

stances? Who could in ~~one~~ hour fix your lot in the country, and let it there abide? God placed you in that town. God knows all your circumstances, for He placed you in them. He sees them most minutely. He pities you most tenderly with His "great and endless pity," but He "will not spare for the crying"⁷ of the child.

If any other lot would have been equally good for you; if any other discipline would have taught you as much of the evil of your own heart, or of the love of God, depend upon it He would have "given you the lighter, and kept back the heavier." Do not argue with the tempter; do not let him persuade you that they are bad circumstances, unsuited to you; but say at once, "Get thee behind me, Satan: for thou savourest not the things that be of God."⁸ God placed me here—it is the will of God. "God is love."⁹ I know that this is the very best place for me, for I was placed here by "the only wise God." There is no other answer to all those questionings, temptations, and suggestions. The same answer will serve for every lot in life—for every trial:

"to wise hearts this certain hope is given,
No mist that men may raise shall hide the eye of heaven."

Always try to judge your friends by *their* circumstances, and not by your own. Try to look at things from *their* point of view; this will prevent you from thinking them unkind or unsympathizing. Do not call them selfish because they cannot see

⁷ Prov. xix. 18.

⁸ Mark viii. 33.

⁹ John iv. 8.

into your circumstances, and feel the pain and trial that there is ~~in them~~. Many things which you would enjoy as a little variety to your life, are to them even mere matters of course, or may even be annoyances. In the latter case, in kindness they would try to prevent you from having any share in them—in the former, they form too much a part of their daily life for them to be conscious that it is otherwise with you. A remove perhaps from your bed to the sofa is to you some great thing. How can you expect sympathy for it? A journey is a matter of great suffering in prospect, at the time, and afterwards; but how can they understand your feelings about it, who can go from place to place as they list? Ask yourself, Did you know how greatly these things tempted and tried others, before you were subjected to them? Well, then, how can your friends know them? These are but “ignorances,” do not then call them want of love. They have the refreshings of air and exercise, of seeing and meeting with the family at meals and at other times; they take these things (as you did once) as common mercies—things not to be noticed; and do not know the real effect for good which they are having upon them: they cannot know, therefore, what the deprivation is to you, or what a fight you must maintain in order not to become morbid and indifferent to all around. Neither can they know those innumerable vexations which so greatly haunt and distress you:—the inability to follow people; to say anything, however necessary it may be; the ina-

bility, too, to get at them, when you want to speak to them; and so many little burdens that must be borne, which could be got rid of at once by speaking of them, and by having the advice and aid of others.

Perhaps when they do come, you have forgotten what you wanted to say to them; or when you have begun to speak to them, they are called away, or remember something that they must do. They promise to return directly, and either are hindered or forget it; and you, meanwhile, are waiting in expectation, perhaps in impatience.

Never forget that all your circumstances, even the most minute, are in the hands of God. Look at them only in this way, and not on each circumstance as an accident which may be removed. Receive it as your present lot, as the expression of the will of God towards you; and then you will find that as it is His "yoke," He will make His "yoke easy, and His burden light,"² if it is borne in His name; and for His sake.

"Thou cam'st not to thy place by accident,
It is the very place God meant for thee;
And shouldst thou there small scope for action see,
Do not for this give room to discontent;
Nor let the time thou owest to God be spent
In idly dreaming how thou mightest be,
In what concerns thy spiritual life, more free
From outward hindrance or impediment:
For presently this hindrance thou shalt find
That without which all goodness were a task,
So slight, that virtue never could grow strong:
And wouldst thou do one duty to His mind,
The Imposer's—over-burden'd thou shalt ask,
And own thy need of grace to help, ere long."

² Matt. xi. 30.

VII

Efforts

A SUBJECT of great trial to all sick people is, what they ought to do? what efforts they ought to make? They dread much more the moral and spiritual effects of overtaking strength, than any mere bodily pain. They know that with every fresh exertion the weary languor increases, the suffering of which no words can tell; that it is not only suffering of body, but of soul, which is involved in it: the languor hindering you from prayer, until the spiritual sight becomes dim: the nervousness too causing such irritability, that the day is spent in struggle and fear lest you should grieve your Lord and Master.

The incapacity for all common duties, causing the fear that you are sinfully self-indulgent; the discontent consequent on this; the fear that others will misunderstand you, and think that indolence, which is to you *great* suffering; the endless length that your future life of pain and weariness appears; the greatness of your sins; the fear that your way has been backward and not forward; the intense feeling of the want of sympathy in those around. Sometimes your own lovelessness actually taking the shape of aversion to some one, which is indeed one of the most trying of all the effects of exhaustion. The deep depression, the consciousness

too that weakness is even influencing your voice and making you seem unkind, when you are not so at heart, but the impression that it is so, often at last producing the reality.

These are some of the trials which result from an effort made under great weakness ; and then, too, there is that exceeding misery of what may be called the pain of languor, when every bone seems out of joint, and every nerve unstrung.

The burden of weakness which you are bearing makes it seem to you as if all cares and trials centred in you, and that all must be borne and done in this very moment of unutterable incapacity. Then you feel that you shall never come out of it, and that seems in itself a wearisome weight of woe. To rouse yourself seems impossible ; to take interest in any thing or person most difficult : all you care for is to be left alone, not spoken to, and to be able to feel for a little season that you have no cares or responsibilities : nothing that you *must* attend to. Sometimes you *must* struggle on, there is really no help for or escape from it ; but even then, if you can get but a quarter of an hour, or even ten minutes, the best remedy is to lie perfectly still on your back, and your head as little raised as you can comfortably bear, with your arms by your sides, and your eyes shut, resolving not to think at all ; do not make the slightest effort, not even to move a limb, or to speak ; do not even try to pray ; refuse all thoughts, pleasant or painful ; or rather do not cherish or encourage any that offer themselves.

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When you first adopt this practice, you will feel and say that you cannot help thinking ; but go on trying, and you will find that by degrees you acquire the habit of *not thinking* ; and that it will become most valuable discipline to you, and be the greatest assistance in all your attempts at acquiring self-control. Try this plan many times in the day, according to your necessities, and the time that you have to spare. If possible, never so over-exert yourself as to get into the wretched state just described ; but at any rate, unless it is impossible, when you begin to feel that it is coming on, lie down and be still.

But, you say, the question recurs,—What are you to *do* ? What efforts ought you to make ? and, What rule can you follow about it ? You say that you feel your judgment is so impaired, that you cannot tell what to do, or what is right ; and yet that you are in continual fear of self-indulgence. Your friends, in their well-intended kindness, leave everything to you to decide, as to what you *can* do, what you *will* do, and what you would *like* to do—alas ! you well know how many things you should *like* to do, that you can never hope to do again here upon earth. As to what you *will* do, you feel that you wish to have no will, but only to “do those things which are lawful and right ;” that just to be told in each thing *what* to do would be your greatest comfort and happiness. Then as to what you *can* do, you feel quite at a loss, and heartily wish that some one could tell you this also. You must make great

allowance for those about you ; you must feel that it is in real kindness that they either abstain from urging you, or urge you beyond your power. In the one case they feel fearful of putting you to pain ; in the other, they fear your falling into a state of invalidism, which would be very injurious and distressing to you. Therefore you must not feel annoyed with them, but look at their intended kindness. It is quite impossible, in many cases, for any one to say what you *can* do. There are certain states in which medical men can tell to a great degree what ought, and what ought not to be attempted ; and then simple obedience is all that is required : but there are many states in which it must be left to the sick person. Perhaps the following suggestions may be of some assistance in such cases :—

1. Tell your whole case to your heavenly Father, and ask Him to show you what He would have you to do: to reveal it to you from day to day, and hour to hour, and to teach you to wait upon Him : ask that you may know His will, and have grace to do it.

2. Do not make plans and rules which you feel to be above your strength, but do what you think you can do ; if you find that you have been mistaken, then do less. Nevertheless, some plan or rule will be very helpful to you, and lessen your perplexities.

3. Do not let any plan be too absolute ; but relax, or make it more rigid, according to your strength *and* circumstances.

4. Make it clear to yourself, by constant prayer and self-examination, that you are really doing what you can, and employing your powers as far as they will go, without too much straining.

5. When you have done so, then do not be teased and worried, and made angry by friends, or even by medical men, telling you that you are merely nervous, that you could do more if you would, and that you give way, and are self-indulgent. Yet try to find out whether there may not still be some truth in what they say; do not shrink from examining whether it be so. Bear it as "unto the Lord;" in silence submit your will, and say in this trial also, "*It is the will of God.*"

6. Do not expect to be able to do exactly the same in one day as in another; and do not make any undue effort to do so. Take the trial of seeming idleness as your portion, when it must be so; and be thankful when another portion of work is given, and you are able to do it.

7. Do not expect to do things as well, or as quickly, or as pleasantly to yourself, as in the days of your health. You must learn now, as never before, that "much study is a weariness to the flesh."³


8. After you have done what seemed to you at the time the right thing, be content; do not question with yourself as to whether it was right, or how far it was right; whether you had not better have done otherwise.

³ Eccles. xii. 12.

You will do well occasionally to make some fresh effort and exertion, partly for the sake of proving whether you are capable of more than you have been doing, and partly to show your friends that you are wishing to put forth your strength to the utmost, to join with the family, and to employ yourself to the utmost.

This will often end in bitter disappointment and discouragement. You will say, I tried to step into life again, and I could not. I have stepped further than I could go, and am thrown back again, and seem further off than ever, and as if I could not get even so far the next time I try. Well, this is a sore trial; but it is better to have tried, and thus to learn what you can do, and especially that you are not lazy and self-indulgent in doing no more than you had previously done. *What* these efforts are to consist of must differ in each case; to some it may be seeing one or more friends; to others, writing a letter; to others, being dressed and laid on a sofa near the bed; to others, being taken out of the room; to others, sitting up in a chair; to others, going down-stairs; to others, taking a drive, a walk, a journey: each according to their several measures of weakness or ability. Settle it in your heart that the kindest of friends will rarely fully understand your state; that they may seem to do so to-day, and to-morrow may seem very obtuse about it. There is but One who can fully understand it, and who can truly direct you what to do at all times.

Doubtless you often feel distressed because you



are so deeply conscious of the *pain* which each act of life costs you : or, at any rate, the pain which you suffer in it, and with it. It seems to you sinfully ungrateful to Him who is always helping and upholding you, to feel the pain so much more vividly than His ever-present almighty aid.

Be not discouraged ; you must not repine about it ; you cannot help feeling the pain and suffering ; you may have a grateful, thankful heart in spite of it, and be very conscious of His presence and help.

VIII

Nervousness


THAT large class of diseases called nervous are pre-eminently hard to bear, and that class is greatly increased by the small knowledge that medical men have as yet obtained of the nerves, and their real suffering. Many peculiarly distressing feelings, which cannot be called pain, are known by the name of nervous. There are few persons who would not rather hear that certain symptoms are owing to any cause, however mortal the disease, than that they are nervous. Oh ! how the word dies upon the heart ! or rather, how it quickens every part of the frame into suffering. *Only nervous !* Why, what can be said more hopeless ? What does it mean ? Oftentimes it means that the pain is not understood, and that the physician sees

no cause for it ; and as he must give it some name, he calls it nervous. The sting of it lies in those words having a double meaning. Used by some persons, they are meant to express intense suffering. Used by others, they mean the figments of a diseased imagination, *almost* self-chosen suffering. The words said by one who really feels for you may be repeated to another person, and quickly change their meaning ; and soon you may hear, "Why do you lie here? Why do you not try to do this or that thing? Your physician says that your disease is only nervous. Why not break through it then, and be like other people?"

How often are you tempted to—

"Pray for sharpest throbs of pain,
To ease you from doubt's galling chain !"

All temptation seems rife—the tempter ever at hand. All the wretched, miserable sensations that are within you, you fancy are seen outwardly. The strange inconsistencies of nervousness are some of its bitterest trials. You fancy at the same moment that every one sees your trials and your fears ; and that no one sees it, no one knows it, understands it, cares for it ; that no one in the world suffers as you do ; that your sufferings are quite peculiar, and therefore cannot be understood. Do not for one moment try to delude yourself into the vain fancy that it is not a very sore affliction. Do not speak of it lightly, or make it appear to others that you do not feel it. Face it all, look it full in the face ; then say, Who sent me this trial? "The only wise



God." Why did He send it? Because He saw that it was quite necessary for me, just fitted to all my needs, the only thing that could so truly "humble me, and prove me, and show me what is in my heart."⁴ Must I bear it always, all my life long? The present is all that I have to do with; "sufficient unto the *day* is the evil thereof."⁵ Alas! that I *must* bear it, and bear it alone! No, it is *God's visitation*. "He sees thee, and understands thee, as He made thee. He knows what is in thee, all thy own peculiar feelings and thoughts, thy disposition and likings, thy strength and thy weakness. He views thee in thy day of rejoicing and thy day of sorrow. He sympathizes in thy hopes and temptations. He interests Himself in all thine anxieties and remembrances, all the risings and failings of thy spirit. He has numbered the very hairs of thy head and the cubits of thy stature. He compasses thee round and bears thee in His arms: He takes thee up and sets thee down. He notes thy very countenance, whether smiling or in tears, whether healthful or sickly. He looks tenderly upon thy hands and thy feet: He hears thy voice, the beating of thy heart, and thy very breathing. Thou dost not love thyself better than He loves thee. Thou canst not shrink from pain more than He dislikes thy bearing it; and if He puts it on thee, it is as thou wilt put it on thyself, if thou art wise, for greater good afterwards."

Never meet this particular form of suffering by

⁴ Deut. viii. 2.

⁵ Matt. vi. 34.

reasoning, or in any other way than by saying, "*It is the will of God.*"

In nervous suffering the frequent consciousness of seeming irritable—of knowing that others think you so, makes the evil a hundred-fold greater. If you could but feel that no one was observing you the trial would be less. Sometimes, perhaps, some one notices it to you; a word to you is like a blow, you writhe and cry out for pain. People see only what is outward—they hear the irritable tone or word—they see the countenance. They do not see the unutterable, awful struggle which is ever going on, and which, by the grace of God, prevents much evil from coming out. How difficult it is to repress the longing—"O that Thou wouldest hide me in the grave, till the secret of Thy wrath is past!"⁶ It is the consciousness of sinning, even when one is fighting with the sin, and resisting almost to the death. It is this which is such agonizing suffering—the seeming to sin against God, and to fight against Him.

Yet do not struggle, for it increases nervous suffering fearfully. Just lie still, and say, "Lord, Thou knowest all things; Thou knowest that I love Thee;"⁷ or say, "Lord have mercy on me; this is a sore trial, help Thou me." For He knows the heart. "He seeth not as man seeth;"⁸ and "He is love;"⁹ and "very pitiful, and of tender mercy."¹ Surely then He is grieved for and with you; is

⁶ Job xiv. 13.

⁷ John xxi. 17.

⁸ 1 Sam. xvi. 7.

⁹ 1 John iv. 8.

1 James v. 12.

“touched with a feeling of your infirmities;” for “He was *in all points* tempted like as we are, yet without sin.”² He bore *nervous* sufferings—how intensely He must have entered into them; every nerve of His was pierced, and wounded, and stretched. Say then, “O Saviour of the world, who by Thy Cross and precious Blood hast redeemed us; save us, and help us, we humbly beseech Thee, O Lord!”³ “By Thine agony and bloody sweat; by Thy Cross and Passion; by Thy precious Death and Burial; by Thy glorious Resurrection and Ascension; and by the coming of the Holy Ghost, Good Lord, deliver us.”⁴ “Fear not; He will strengthen you and uphold you by the right hand of His righteousness.”⁵

IX

Taking Opiates

IT is often a point of great difficulty and distress to sick people, whether they are right to take opiates. Their doubts generally arise from two causes:


1. The fear of acquiring so bad a habit, which can scarcely fail to increase upon them as their needs increase; and
2. Questionings whether it can be right in them

² Heb. iv. 15.³ Service for the Visitation of the Sick.⁴ The Litany⁵ Isa. xli. 10.

to subdue the sense of pain, when God Himself has sent the pain ; when Christ Himself endured such extreme suffering, and refused to drink, even in the midst of His agonizing thirst.

These reasons are not only very plausible, but contain much truth. There can be no question, that to get into such a *habit* would be very injurious, and very sinful ; but this supposes that there is no *necessity* for it ; and if there be none, it is simply a wicked indulgence. If a medical man considers that an opiate is necessary, then the patient has no more right to refuse to take that, than he has to take any other medicine. The taking of any medicine needlessly and habitually would be a very bad habit to acquire.

The nature and measure of all medicine taken should be regulated wholly by a medical man ; and we should take all these things passively from his hand, looking to him as the representative and the servant of God, sent by Him to relieve us. If we find the opiates cloud our minds, we should mention it to the physician ; and if he says that there is no help for it, that it surely will be its effect in our case, and yet that the remedy is necessary, then we are bound to submit our will and pleasure, and to take the medicine, and to bear the trial as part of the necessary discipline. The patient should of course exactly learn the quantity that he is to take, and *strictly* to keep to it, neither diminishing it because of his own scruples, or increasing it if it produces pleasant effects, taking it always simply as



a matter of obedience. It is certainly true that God sends pain to us ; but the same argument which would prevent us from taking opiates would apply to all remedies, and we should refuse to try any, lest they should alleviate our suffering. The argument, that our Lord refused all alleviations does not hold good, for He drank the whole cup of suffering, that He might know it all, and understand it all, and be able to sympathize with us. He refused every alleviation, that He might not escape from tasting one drop which any of His servants might hereafter be called to drink.

X

Fancies about Food

AT times you may be very much tried by fancies about food. Some particular thing you may desire, and if it cannot be obtained, nothing else will content you. Or you may wish it dressed in some particular way, your directions are mistaken, you either refuse to eat the food, or do so with disrelish or disgust, or with a very discontented mind, complaining the while of your cook's stupidity, being angry with her, and perhaps speaking of it to other people ; or you may wish for it at a certain hour, you may be kept waiting, and then lose your desire for, or will to eat it. Or when food, however dainty, is brought, you may have set your

mind on something else ; and either be thoroughly discontented, or loathe the food altogether. Or you may fancy first one thing and then another, until your friends find you so hard to please that they are at a loss how to meet your wishes. Or you may fancy something which you know is out of season, or only to be had at a very high price ; or you may hear of a thing, and a sudden fancy takes you that you must have it, and you are restless until it is procured.

All these are most trying and humiliating things ; they do indeed speak of the "corruptible body,"⁶ "the vile body ;"⁷ and they are trials which the best disciplined minds and the most self-denying people are subject to ; but certainly *not* equally with those who have been accustomed to indulge their appetites, and never made any attempt at resisting their inclinations.

To many it is a matter of real consequence *what* they eat, because it increases their illness to take certain things ; but they may soon so far ascertain what suits them, as to let it pass into a habit of their lives, which they scarcely ever need to consider. Of course, each one will feel it a duty to take the food, either that is ordered by a medical man for them, or else which they find agree with them best.

To some perhaps the following suggestions may be helpful :—

1. Resolve as little as possible to think "what

⁶ Wisd. ix. 15.

⁷ Phil. iii. 21.

shall we eat, or what shall we drink ;"⁸ but to take what is brought thankfully, whether you quite fancy it or no. This of course implies that you are in a household where things are thought of for you. The difficulty is increased greatly, when any one has to provide for themselves ; in the latter case, however, it is best to have as simple a plan as possible, and rarely to depart from it, so that the order and the food may come naturally.

2. Think as little as you can of these fancies which so distress you ; when they come, do not reason or parley with them ; try to turn your thoughts to something else ; at any rate, do not dwell on them, and speak of them rarely, if at all.

3. Look upon them as a trial, as meant to try you, and not as any proof of your sinfulness.

4. Some sick people have found it a wonderful help in checking such thoughts, and all fancies about food, to abstain from certain food at stated times. Fasting, strictly so called, would be wrong in you at a time when your physician has ordered you to take all the nourishment that you can bear ; and when he has prescribed the quantity and quality of your food. But there may nevertheless be many little indulgences foregone, or less taken of the thing you prefer ; which, if your health needs it, may easily be made up, by taking some less agreeable food : you can easily arrange this, especially if you have the ordering of your own meals.

Whatever you do, do it silently as "unto the

⁸ Matt. vi. 25.

Lord, and not unto men ;" ⁹ secretly, so that only He that "seeth in secret" may notice it ; let it be a *sacrifice* ; do not be content unless it is ; and then offer it up, cheerfully and willingly, to Him, who loveth "the cheerful giver," ¹ and who, as He accepted the widow's mite gladly, because she gave all her substance, so He will accept the very little offering that you are able to make. Whatever you do, let it be done seriously, earnestly, deliberately, perseveringly (not a sudden and impulsive thing), and prayerfully.

Consider well what you will do, and then do it at regular and stated times ; for this will do you much more good than greater things done irregularly and from impulse ; the very regularity, the feeling of being under a *law*, is excellent discipline for the mind. Do not begin on too great a scale ; and then, fancying that you find no benefit from it, give it up. You probably may not experience any benefit at first, perhaps not for a long time ; but persevere, you will find a great blessing another day ; and "though it tarry, wait for it." ² Do not make any great efforts at first, begin with a *very* little thing, so small that you may fancy until you try that you shall not feel it ; you will soon find that you do. After a time you may try some little thing in addition, and so on.

5. Occasionally resolve to take some particular food continuously for several days or longer, without any variation.

⁹ Eph. vi. 7.

¹ 2 Cor. ix. 7.

² Hab. ii. 3.

6. When you have tried all means, and yet the fancies tease you, say, I must not be fretted by this, it is indeed most humbling discipline, but *It is the will of God.*

You will do well, at all times to remember, that the being taken from the family, and having your meals alone, does offer constant temptation. The blessings of social meals are many and great, greater than we have any idea of until we are deprived of them. Besides bringing the family together, giving them stated times of meeting, of keeping up their intercourse with each other, of hearing and seeing much of family life and interests, that they would otherwise wholly lose, the eating together instead of apart, takes off the selfishness of the meal ; makes it not for one's self alone, but for all ; something shared and mutual ; and conversation helps to make one forget the food, and not to find the chief pleasure in *it*. Persons who have all meals alone, are tempted to selfishness, to think of the food set before them, of their own capabilities of taking it, and many other temptations too small to mention, but which are nevertheless trying. One, however, must not be omitted—the sadness and loneliness, and feeling of isolation which solitary meals bring ; the thing almost seems a contradiction, and the sick person seldom feels more alone than at meal-times. But He who gives you the blessing of the food is present with you ; receive this mercy from His hands, and ask him to bless it. Thus you will feel less that you are alone and

isolated. Thus realising His presence, you will be enabled, "whether you eat or drink, or whatsoever you do, to do all to the glory of God."³

XI

Nights

IN days of health gone by, you looked to the night to renew your strength, to overcome your weariness, and to enable you to forget sorrow for a season. You "laid down and slept"⁴ and then woke refreshed; or, if you did not, you felt that something was amiss; that you could not be well. But now the case is reversed; often the night is your time of greatest suffering, of peculiar languor, of restlessness and sleeplessness. All your anxieties start up then, clothed in blacker garments than they wore by day; all your fears for yourself and others; your most unloving, your saddest, most murmuring and discontented thoughts. Sometimes you say, "Would God it were morning!" and are perhaps just as ready to say in the morning, "Would God it were evening!"⁵ Anything but what *is*, your wearied and worn-out body and spirit seem to prefer. Some opiate is given; at length you fall into a dose; but you are perhaps (partly at least) conscious of what is going on around you, and of the sounds within hearing. You soon wake

³ 1 Cor. x. 31.⁴ Ps. iii. 5.⁵ Deut. xxviii. 67.

unrested, and more wearied in body, and tempted in mind than before. After a while you fall asleep, but your sleep is full of dreams, often most distressing and startling. You dread the night coming, and say, "Wearisome nights are appointed me."⁶ Did you ever think that the words of your complaining carry with them the truest comfort, are "*appointed* me?" Then they do not come by any chance or accident, God *ordered* them for you; He knows how many such you need, and He will not give you one more than is necessary. Surely in that last night of agony He tasted the extreme of your suffering. He does not appoint such wrestling for you; and when He sends you the sharpest suffering, so that your "whole head is sick, and your whole heart faint"⁷—so that you "groan, being burdened;"⁸ even when He is by, who, in wonderful pity and condescension, has promised to "make all your bed in your sickness."⁹ You well know what *that* expression conveys to your mind. You know all the tossings and restlessness which make your bed so uneasy and so uncomfortable a place. You know what it is, especially in the night, to be "afraid of that which is high," and that "fears shall be in the way."¹ You know the strange fancies and sights that your poor weak brain will conjure up; how hard it is to convince yourself that they are not fearful realities. You know how sometimes a panic at being alone will seize you,

⁶ Job vii. 3. ⁷ Isa. i. 5. ⁸ 2 Cor. v. 4.

⁹ Ps. xli. 3. ¹ Eccles. xii. 5.

and yet you rightly feel that you ought not to disturb your attendant, who may be asleep in an adjoining room. You know too what it is to lie and hear or know that she is asleep, and to be tempted to envy her, until at last you feel as if you could not bear that she should have such comfort, and you be deprived of it; and you are tempted to wake her. Beware how you yield to such a temptation; resolve never on any excuse to call her, never unless it is truly necessary. If you once yielded to such a temptation, it would assault you more strongly the next time, until either your selfishness gained the mastery, or your conflict would be very sharp. There is no way of meeting this trial but by looking at these "wearisome nights" as "*appointed*" you, and saying, *It is the will of God*. Think, when you are able, of His unspeakable nearness to you: "Yea, the darkness hideth not from Thee; but the night shineth as the day: the darkness and the light are both alike to Thee."² Think of His agony, that *night* of agony; your weariness and weakness cannot be greater than His was. You cannot pray perhaps continuously; but however short the petition may be, however broken the sentence, —even a mere groan,—it will reach His ears. At any rate you may seek to feel that "His left hand is under your head, that His right hand doth embrace"³ you. Lay yourself then quietly down in His arms, and believe that "the eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms;"⁴

² Ps. cxxxix. 12. ³ Cant. ii. 6. ⁴ Deut. xxxiii. 27.

then "thou shalt not be afraid for the terror by night,"⁵ for "the Lord is thy rereward."⁶

It is often a great help at night to repeat poems, or hymns, or as much of them as can be remembered; or the Psalms, and other words of Holy Scripture, or the Services of the Church. Of course it will be a broken recollection, a verse or a line of one perhaps, and then something else; but this matters not, it is a great help in keeping out unholy and distressing thoughts or fears, by occupying the mind and quieting it, and so giving it the best hope of sleep. At first we may seem to know nothing, but by degrees more and more will come to mind, that we have read or learnt long ago and thought we had forgotten, but it was only lying dormant, ready to be used in time of need. Those who have the ability to read, and whose nights are very feverish, or who wake often, startled by troubled dreams, will find nothing so soothing to their minds, or so likely to calm their thoughts and prepare them for sleep, as to read one or more of the Psalms for the day, or part of one of the Lessons. It will take off the painful impression of the dream, and they will find it a means by which "the Lord will give unto His people the blessing of peace."⁷

⁵ Ps. xci. 5.

⁶ Isa. lviii. 8.


⁷ Ps. xxix. 10.

XII

D a y s

AFTER a wearisome night, you begin the next day either with a feverish strength which is soon spent, and leaves you more languid and weary than before, or else with a most oppressive sense of exhaustion, languor, and unfitness to begin a new day.

You think, "I have such and such things to do; such an one to see; and how *can* I do anything?" It is very difficult to bear this oppressive sense of impossibility; but do not fix too accurately what you *can* do, and what you *cannot* do. Let circumstances decide; things will not come exactly as you expect them. When you look forward into the day, everything seems as if it would clash; every one will come together, you think; and what shall you do? Whom shall you refuse, and whom shall you see? Will it seem like making yourself of consequence to refuse? Had you not better see every one, say nothing about being weak, and sink under it, if you must? You say, What line can I draw? what can I do? If medical men would only say, you must *not* do so and so, then you would find no difficulty at all in obedience, but would thankfully keep strictly to their injunctions. When they do give such directions it is a great relief to you, by making it a simple matter of obedience, and taking



from you the dread lest you should in any way be over-indulging or sparing yourself, when you ought to be "denying yourself, and taking up the cross."⁸

The keenest part of your trial is this uncertainty and perplexity and doubt as to what is your duty. It is not that you want to escape from suffering, or from activity, but that, besides not knowing what is the actual measure of your strength, you do not know in what measure it is good to task it; whether to spend it all at once, or to try and preserve it.

To those who have a strong feeling of the duty of "redeeming the time, because the days are few,"⁹ it is a very great trial not to know how to regulate time and employments, so as to be really useful to themselves and others. They earnestly desire to give every moment to God, and that all their employments should glorify Him; and not merely be for present amusement and occupation, but for lasting good to the Church, as well as to "this sick member." How to do this is often very perplexing; perhaps the following rules may be of some assistance:—

1. To ask God in all things to direct and rule our hearts: to order them in *all* things: to direct the mind to studies which shall expand it, and so to fit it for future usefulness, if such be His holy will.

2. To choose those subjects for which there is a natural aptitude.

3. To vary employments, and never to continue

⁸ Matt. xvi. 24.

⁹ Col. iv. 5.

even an amusement too long, obeying the well-known indications of approaching fatigue.

4. To let some employment be merely mechanical.

5. To spend some time in mere recreation, without counting it waste of time.

6. If two kinds of reading are to follow each other, to spend at least a few minutes between each, in merely lying still, without even thinking.

7. To allow yourself to spend no time in vexation that you can do so very little ; but thank God for each thing that He allows you to do.

8. Regulate your time so as to choose that part of the day when you are the strongest, for the subjects which require the most attention, and so on, in order.

9. Do not force these employments on yourself, as rules that must not be broken, but let your lessened or increased illness, and other circumstances, guide you.

10. Do not tease yourself with opinions that others may give of the duty of your doing more, or of exerting yourself more than you do ; neither resist them wholly. Lay them before God, and ask Him who knows your heart, and what you really can do in every particular, to show you what you *ought* to do, and to give you the will to do it.

11. Do not fritter your mind with *mere* light reading ; for everything which expands the mind, enables it to sympathize more with others, and to hold more communion with God. Light reading is apt to occupy the minds of the weak more than of

the strong; to fill their thoughts when they would pray, and to haunt their dreams and night visions.

12. As much as possible set some object before you, and read with it in view; either turn your reading to some special purpose, or fix on some subject to which you will especially apply your thoughts and studies. This will help to remove the objectless feeling which sick persons suffer so much from. Generally speaking, works of fiction, and especially novels, are ill-adapted for the reading of sick persons. They possess the mind, prevent it from thinking of other subjects, haunt it as well by day as by night, so as at times materially to increase illness; they are particularly ill-adapted to persons who are suffering from nervousness and great weakness, and who have not, therefore, the full command and control of their minds. To them the story they have read may assume an actual form of truth and life; if it be very tragical, they may suffer with the sufferers as they read, until the suffering becomes their own, and cannot be laid aside with the book, but produces restlessness, feverishness, anxiety, and terror, both in waking and sleeping hours. Besides, there is another very injurious effect, which is, that if the story is of great interest, there is an intense desire to finish it, and great impatience and irritability at any interruption. The strain upon the mind and nerves is continued too long, and causes, perhaps, increase of suffering, and loss of self-control for many days to come. Surely sick people should avoid everything which lessens

self-control, as they have weakness and pain continually to sap it. They need everything which will brace the mind and the nerves. Add to this, that if they can read but a little, it is better to read such things as will "not perish with the using,"¹⁰ but tend to "help them forward in the right way which leadeth unto everlasting life."¹¹

Voyages and travels contain enough of interest, and take the reader into new scenes and circumstances, and thus draw his thoughts from himself and his usual train of ideas.

Nevertheless, there are states of illness in which the occasional reading of works of fiction may be desirable. In very acute pain, toothache or any similar pains, when the mere object is to forget both self and pain, a very interesting story will sometimes accomplish the object for a time.

These rules apply chiefly to those who have leisure which they desire to use aright whenever they have strength to do so. But many sick people are so circumstanced that they have no leisure. Their daily duties, small as they may seem, take all their strength; and when they are not engaged in their necessary little employments, they can do nothing but rest. For them, the plain duty is to do the work set before them with a willing heart; and though it seem at times to press the very life out of them, and to increase all their bodily sufferings, yet let them try to be very thankful that they have work given them to do by God Himself; let them

¹⁰ Col. ii. 22.

¹¹ Service for the Visitation of the Sick.

offer all their time, and strength, and powers to Him, asking Him each morning to show them, hour by hour, what He would have them to do; and asking Him to help them ever to remember that with each portion of work and of suffering, will come also the needful portion of strength, because "He is not a hard master, reaping where He has not sown, gathering where He has not strawed."²


In the morning let them consider quietly what seems to lie before them during the day, and commit each thing separately to God, asking Him to teach and guide, and *quiet* and strengthen them. It may be done in but few words—in broken words and sentences, if there is no more power. Let them ask Him to teach them His will; to guide and direct all circumstances; to give wisdom in intercourse with each member of the family, servants, children, or whatever there may be. Ask, that you may receive whatever tidings letters may bring you, or whatever annoyances they may cause you, calmly, and as the will of your heavenly Father. Ask, that whatever letters you write, He may guide and direct you. Ask, that whatever unexpected circumstances may arise, He will help you to remember that they are from Him. Ask for wisdom and sincerity in all your intercourse with your fellow-creatures—those of your own household; any persons that you expect to see; or any who may come unexpectedly. Ask, that if you are particularly

² Matt. xxv. 24.

weak or weary when they come, you may not betray it, or even utter exclamations of impatience to the servant who announces their coming. Ask, that you may go patiently and meekly and quietly through all the *fatigues* as well as the events of the day, and in them all, offer up your will to God. That Collect, which in the Prayer Book begins, "Almighty God, unto whom all hearts be open," used to be, "unto whom every will speaks." Let your will speak to Him; He will hear it, and accept it, and judge you, not according to what you cannot, but what you can do. Having done so, remember all the day that He is very near to you, and at every fresh need let your will speak to Him.

Do not yield to the temptation of looking at everything *at once*, as if everything would happen at once, and all the events of the day be crowded into an hour. Do not thus forecast, but take each thing as it comes to you, and look upon it as the present expression of the will of God concerning you; then regard the next in the same way, and thus receive your day piece by piece from Him who will remember always when he gives you work to do, that you need strength to do it.

You will find it a very great blessing to you, as much as possible, to do everything at stated hours; to do each thing at the same hour every day: or, if it is a thing of but weekly occurrence, to do it on the same day of the week, and at the same hour: it makes things come naturally and easily, and with far less effort; you know *what*



you have to do, and can arrange accordingly; moreover, habit makes all things so much easier and less burdensome; and prevents the considering what you *have* to do, and what you ought to do next.

Often, when you have almost fainted in spirit, the thought comes, "If thou hast run with the footmen, and they have wearied thee, what shalt thou do with the horsemen?"³ Put it from you, it is a faithless thought; if you need more strength you will have it be sure of that; or the call to greater exertion may never come to you. Your business is with the present; leave the future in His hands who will be sure to do the best, the very best for you.

XIII

Disappointments and Discouragements

DO not expect to be wholly freed from sickly thoughts whilst the sickly body is pressing you down, and causing you "to groan, being burdened."⁴

Friends may tell you that your state is surely very wrong, for that it should be, that as "the outward man decays, the inward is renewed day by day."⁵ They repeat true words, but they are mistaken in their application of them; for "except a

³ Jer. xii 5.

⁴ 2 Cor. v. 4.

⁵ 2 Cor. iv. 16.

corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die it bringeth forth much fruit."⁶ "That which thou sowest is not quickened except it die; and that which thou sowest, thou sowest not that body that shall be, but bare grain, it may chance of wheat, or some other grain: but God giveth it a body as it hath pleased Him." "It is sown in weakness; it is raised in power."⁸ "My substance was not hid from Thee when I was made in secret, and curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth. Thine eyes did see my substance yet being unperfect; and in Thy Book all my members were written, which in continuance were fashioned when as yet there was none of them."⁹

So it is with the spiritual body—*how* it is moulded and fashioned is hidden from our sight. We cannot see how this severe frost, which seems for the present only to harden the ground, and even prevent it from receiving the dews of heaven, can be of any benefit; but wait a little, and the spring time will come, and when "the flowers appear on the earth" again, and "the time of the singing of birds is come,"¹ then we shall see how needful the frost has been, and how it preserved the precious seed. Doubtless "the inward man *is* renewed," but "the secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him."² He knows it, and knows *how* it is. Do not be out of heart when your friends offer

⁶ John xii. 24.⁷ 1 Cor. xv. 36—38.⁸ 1 Cor. xv. 43.⁹ Ps. cxxxix. 15, 16. 1 Cant. ii. 11.² Ps. xxv. 14.

you these deep and harrowing discouragements ; say only, " Have pity upon me, have pity upon me, O ye my friends ; for the hand of God hath touched me." ³ " I shall yet praise Him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God." ⁴ " Though He slay me yet will I trust in Him." ⁵ Do not afterwards revolve the question until it ends with your saying, " There is no hope." ⁶ Just simply tell it all to " Our Father," or rather say that you cannot tell Him, but that He knows your trouble. Ask Him, if it please Him, to help you to " let your light shine before men, that they, seeing your good works, may glorify your Father which is in heaven ;" ⁷ but if it must be otherwise, then to help you to say, " Thy will be done." ⁸

Friends will say also that you have so much leisure time, that they envy you your leisure ; that they sometimes long to be ill that they may have more uninterrupted time to serve God ; and that they think that illness is such a time for communion with God, and for growing in grace. Do not be discouraged by this. Do not fancy that because you find it otherwise, therefore you are wholly in a wrong state ; and that all the past has been but delusion.

It is "*afterward*" that it yieldeth the peaceable fruits of righteousness to them who are exercised thereby." ⁹ Leave it all to His righteous judgment

³ Job xix. 21.

⁴ Ps. xlii. 11.

⁵ Job xiii. 15.

⁶ Jer. ii. 25.

⁷ Matt. v. 16.

⁸ Matt. xxvi. 42.

⁹ Heb. xii. 11.

—leave yourself in His hands. He knows your circumstances, your pain, and everything that belongs to you ; and He will judge you according to those circumstances, and not according to your estimate of yourself, or of them. “Fret not thyself” in this matter ; but as you “suffer according to the will of God,” so “commit yourself in the hands of Him your faithful Creator.”¹

XIV

P o v e r t y

ONE thing more must be mentioned as a fruitful source of trial, and it is a mercy if it be not of discontent also. At all times poverty is truly hard to bear ; but when it is united with sickness, it is indeed so sore a trial, that only He who bore it all, who “humbled Himself,”² “took on Him the form of a servant,”³ “had not where to lay His head ;”⁴ who passed through the extreme of hunger and thirst for our sakes, can fully understand it, or know its exceeding bitterness—its exceeding fullness of temptation—its sorrows, anxieties, and sufferings. He knows it all ; He not only tasted it, but drank the whole cup to the very dregs. He knows how very difficult it is for you to procure actual necessities ; how many things which seem to

¹ 1 Pet. iv. 19.

³ Phil. ii. 7.

² Phil. ii. 8.

⁴ Matt. viii. 20.

others quite necessary you must forego ; how often you must take food which you can scarcely swallow, because you can get nothing else ; how often you can, in consequence, take nothing at all, but "suffer hunger." He knows the pain of hunger full well ; He bore it for you that He might understand it all, and be able to bear you up under the trial. If your "strength is hunger-bitten,"⁵ He knows it, and pities you. But this may not be your chief trial ; it may not have come to this, and yet you may be living in constant anxiety and distress, feeling deeply what very heavy burdens and expenses sickness entails, and that you have no means of meeting these extra expenses. Perhaps you are wholly laid aside from that calling by which you obtained your daily bread. If you have any relations depending on you, you will feel this far more deeply ; or, if for the time, you are obliged to be dependent on them, and know with what difficulty they can meet the necessity, you deny yourself in every possible way : nevertheless the costs exceed your means. You are very sick at heart ; the constant anxiety preys on your health, and nerves, and spirits ; and leaves you less and less probability of returning to your work. In vain you think that if you could only see such a physician you should recover. You feel that you have no means. Perhaps this difficulty is removed ; his kindness makes it easy to you, but you have gained little ; he orders remedies, those remedies seem to you either out of your reach, or

⁵ Job xviii. 12.

involving great sacrifices ; he tells you that you chiefly need rest and freedom from anxiety. Alas ! he might as well have ordered you to China. You think that if you could only go to the sea-side you should recover ; it is out of your power. You need a nurse, but cannot have one. You are told to take exercise ; you cannot walk, and yet you cannot afford to have any conveyance. You are to take a great deal of nourishment, which to you is all but impossible, and you feel that you ought to deny yourself every little comfort. Thus you become more and more out of heart and hopeless.

All this, and the innumerable trials which belong to this state, which are best known to those sufferers into whose soul the iron enters, are indeed most bitter griefs. Painful as it may be to you, perhaps it will be your duty to make those friends acquainted with your trial who can assist you. Do not let any pride keep you from it. If our Lord has called you to walk with Him in poverty, remember that He has sanctified the state ; it is henceforward a "holy state." Do not let the fear of troubling them hinder you from speaking to them, since He has said, that He will look on all acts of mercy as done to Himself : "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me."⁶ Do not defraud your friends of the blessing which is promised to those who give even "a cup of cold water to a disciple in the name of a disciple."⁷ You will seek also to take it humbly

⁶ Matt. xxv. 40.

⁷ Matt. x. 42.



and thankfully if you are refused ; receiving this trial as from the hands of God. After all, your true and sure comfort will be, that God has called you into this state ; that He who has passed through it all, our sympathizing High Priest, knows every step of the way ; all its thorns, and snares, and pitfalls ; all its crosses, and extreme bitterness. He would not have called you into this suffering, if He had not seen it to be quite necessary for you. Do not reason about it. Do not say sickness would be so easy to bear without poverty. Say only, "It is the Lord, let Him do what seemeth good in His sight."⁸ I came into these circumstances by no choice of my own, it was His will ; and it is His will that keeps me in them. Be sure that He who fed Elijah by ravens, would not suffer you to be "tempted above that ye are able ;"⁹ for He "the Almighty God is the Lord of life, and of death, and of all things to them pertaining."¹ He can raise up friends for you, and He *will* do so, when and as He sees best for you ; for the "silver and the gold are the Lord's."² Only lay before Him all your wants and circumstances, every little trial, even those which are too small to tell to your friends, and then answer every sad thought, every suggestion of discouragement, or anxiety, or fear for the future, with, "I have nothing to do with the future, that is not in my hands ; I have only to do with the present moment : God has placed me in these very circumstances ; I

⁸ 1 Sam. iii. 18.

¹ Service for the Visitation of the Sick.

⁹ 1 Cor. x. 13.

² Hag. ii. 18

must not scan them ; I know that they are the best, the very best for me, because the God of Love has placed me in them. *It is the will of God.*"

XV

Difficulty of Prayer

PRAYER is often a subject of great trial to sick people. They think it should be one of blessing only ; but the body and mind are so closely connected, that the weakened and suffering body prevents the free exercise of the mind ; " The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak."³

You try to fix your thoughts in prayer ; you feel that you have so much to ask ; so much to pray for. But then a stupor comes over you ; you try to rouse yourself, but in vain. You start up : " where are my thoughts ? What ! have I fallen asleep even in prayer, even in speaking to God ? " Thoughts seem *fixed* ; it is not so much, sometimes, that your thoughts wander, as that they seem *gone*, as if they did not belong to you, and you have no control over them. Sometimes even floating images, or figures may flit around you. If you wish to pray for your friends, it seems as if all that you could do was just to mention their names before God, and not as you desire, to " ask those things which are requisite and necessary as well for their bodies as

³ Matt. xxvi. 41.

their souls." You rarely, if ever, "*pour* out your heart before Him."⁴ Sometimes you feel that if you could only do so, that if you could only ask for the strength which you feel so greatly to need, then you *know* that "He would rend the heavens and come down,"⁵ and "do exceeding abundantly above all that you can ask or think."⁶ It seems as if the very endeavour to pray dispersed all your thoughts. You have no realization of His presence; and, what you think worse, no lively, earnest desire to realize it. Does everything seem to you unreality and abstraction? Does the eye of your soul seem to be dimmed? Do you almost envy him who could say, "I see men as trees walking?"⁷ You seem to see nothing. If you catch sight of something, whilst you look it floats away, and is lost in the maze of your thoughts. You used to be sorely distressed with wandering thoughts in prayer; but now the trial seems to be the absence of all thoughts.

You feel as if your mind were giving way; you seem to see it crumble, even whilst you watch it. What is coming upon you? Is it entire loss of mind? Oh, no! it is the pervading presence of weakness, which if it pleases God ever to remove, and give you back your wonted strength of body, shall be renewed also. In the meantime do not struggle, but be still. "It is the part of faith to believe that, since nothing is of chance, He, 'with-

⁴ Ps. lxii. 8.

⁶ Eph. iii. 20.

⁵ Isa. lxiv. 1.

⁷ Mark. viii. 24.

out whom not a sparrow falleth to the ground,⁸ appointeth each accident of thy life. He, with whom the 'hairs of thy head are all numbered,'⁹ knoweth every throb of thy brow, each hardly-drawn breath, each shoot of pain, each beating of the fevered pulse, each sinking of the aching heart. Receive, then, what are trials to *thee*, not in the main only, but one by one, from His all-loving hands; thank His love for each; unite each with the sufferings of the Redeemer; pray that He will hereby hallow them to thee. Thou wilt not know now what He thereby will work in thee; yet, day by day, shalt thou receive the impress of the likeness of the ever-blessed Son; and in thee, too, while thou knowest it not, God shall be 'glorified,' yea, and 'shall glorify thee.'"

Perhaps you are looking for something which does not now belong to you. It may be that you are thinking that prayer is some hard, separate duty; that you are forgetting that when the body is so prostrated, the mind must share in the prostration; that "He that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit;"¹ that He reads your heart, understands it all, knows what you would say far better than you know it, yea, even *before* you know it yourself.

It is the posture of the soul, the renunciation of the will, or rather our will being so united with His, that they are no longer two wills, but as one will, that He looks at. He who created you surely

⁸ Matt. x. 29.

⁹ Matt. x. 30.

¹ Rom. viii. 27.

knows of what you are made. "He knoweth your frame; He *remembereth* that you are dust;"³ not once *knew* it, but *remembers* it.

Do not fear then. He is "very pitiful, and of tender mercy."³ He does not need your *words* to enable Him to understand your thoughts, "all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do."⁴

Silence and submission are your offerings now, and will be as acceptable in His sight as were your prayers in other days.

Do not think that continuous speaking to God is the only kind of true prayer. "Lord, Thou knowest my *desire*, and my groaning is not hid from Thee."⁵ It is at your heart that He looks. He sees what is there, things which you cannot frame into words, which you cannot express, He fully understands. You cannot tell Him anything; He knows that. You can only say, "Lord, help me."⁶ He hears, and will surely answer you. You say when you wake in the morning, and in the night, and often in the day, "Vouchsafe, O Lord, to keep me this day without sin."⁷ That is prayer, most true prayer. He does not measure its worthiness by its length, but by its sincerity. The mere sense of being in His arms, of His understanding you, His loving you, and embracing you, that is prayer; for it is the losing yourself in Him.

³ Ps. ciii. 14.

⁴ Heb. iv. 13.

⁶ Matt. xv. 25.

³ James v. 11.

⁵ Ps. xxxviii. 9.

⁷ Te Deum.

seem to thy mind, as it were, a phantom which has no reality ; if thy prayers seem but words, with no substance, sent idly into the air, and not ascending to God ; if things unseen seem to thee only a dream, things seen the only reality ; if fervid words move thee not, thoughts of love kindle thee not, the passion of Christ melt thee not, yet despond not ; but out of the deep cry unto God, and He will hear thy voice."

" ' Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him.'⁶ Seemeth this a great thing? The great and holy words will mean yet more, ' Lo ! if He slay me I will trust in Him,' not ' although' only, but *because* He slayeth me. It is life to be touched by the hand of God ; to be slain is, through the cross of Christ, the pledge of Resurrection. Yes, then may our hearts be strong and renewed, when, at His pitiful touch, the ' sinew shrinks.' It is the Redeemer's hand which upholds, whilst it seems to cripple, strengthens, while it seemeth to put forth His strength against our weakness : by His strength we have power with God, while we can only weep and make supplication to Him. Not sensible comforts, nor delight in prayer, nor His very voice to the heart, nor tokens of His presence, nor the overflowings of His consolations, *may be* such a proof of His love for the soul, as the unseen, unfelt strength by which He keeps the fainting soul in life, to trust in Him."

People in health have little or no idea of what a

⁶ Job. xiii. 15.

state of weakness involves. They are apt to tell sick persons that they must have so much time for prayer, that it is their present vocation; "they are to be praying missionaries." Alas! how their hearts sink at the words, "so much time for prayer!" Yes, you know that it must seem so to those who know nothing of the trials of illness; but you know that sometimes it seems quite impossible to pray at all; that often the *effort* required for any continuous act of fixed attention is impossible; that you fall into dreamy imaginations; that petition passes into mere thinking, or into the entire absence of all thought. Sometimes your infirmities keep you from even realizing His presence at all. You feel that you *are* in His presence; but as if you were asleep in His arms, unable to think, or meditate, or pray, or realize anything. You are just conscious of this, and nothing else: I am in His arms: He holds me, He is embracing me, surrounding me with His love, with Himself." But then the thought comes, If it be so, how ungrateful not to love Him more; not to speak to Him, and "pour out my complaint before Him, and shew Him of my trouble!"⁷ The answer is, He knows that you *wish* to do this, He knows all your heart, He knows that it is a grief to you that you cannot do it. "The desire of your soul is to His name, and to the remembrance of His holiness."⁸ He knows that you cannot get beyond that. He will not expect anything of you that you cannot do, for it is

⁷ Ps. cxlii. 2.⁸ Isa. xxvi. 8.

HIS will that you should suffer as you do, and He has sent the trial. In one sense He expects less of you than you do of yourself; He knows that it would be a *pleasure* to be, and to you to feel that you are, in a higher state; and He will bless and sanctify to you the trial of being in a lower state; and therefore you may "rest in His love."⁹

That peculiar languor and stupor extends to everything; "is it not therefore of the body?"¹ Do not attempt continuous acts of prayer when they are impossible. "Lay your hand on your mouth, and put your mouth in the dust:"² does not that express *silence*? Let your "soul be silent upon God."³ In stillness you will find God; "not in the whirlwind, or in the fire, but in the still small voice."⁴

Even when continuous prayer is impossible, it is often a great help to fix on certain subjects, and to remember each one at some stated time of the day. Not to try to do more than *remember* it; think of it, keep it in mind, *bear* it on your heart before God. So likewise, though you may not be able to pray for your friends as you desire to do, you may remember them in heart, and by name, one by one, before your "Father, and their Father; your God, and their God."⁵

Do not make great efforts, or fancy that you never pray unless your prayers occupy a given time, unless they seem very fervent, unless you feel de-

⁹ Zeph. iii. 17.

¹ 1 Cor. xii. 15.

² Mic. vii. 16.

³ Ps. lxii. 1.

⁴ 1 Kings xix. 12.

⁵ John xx. 17.

light in them. "Lord, help me."⁶ "My father, this is a time of need : help me now." "Graciously look upon our afflictions." "Pitifully behold the sorrows of our heart." "Forgive all my sin."⁷ "O God, make speed to save us. O Lord, make haste to help us." "O Son of David, have mercy upon us."⁸ "I am afflicted very much ;"⁹ help Thou me. "Lord, have mercy upon us. Christ, have mercy upon us." These sentences, and numberless others, which will occur to you as need arises ; and above all, the Lord's Prayer, will convey your wants to Him, and as surely bring you answers of peace and blessing, as the most lengthened prayer ever did, in days of your strength and vigour.

We must remember also that it is not *our* prayers alone that are offered, that they are all moulded afresh for us, offered again, by our Intercessor ; and "His intercession has also this further perfection—it is the prayer not only of Divine love and knowledge, but of perfect human sympathy. 'We have not an High Priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.'¹ What as God, He could never taste ; as Man, He tried to the uttermost. He knows us as perfect Man. The mysterious knowledge of personal experience, of personal suffering in human flesh, which He gained on earth, He has still in Heaven. Even before the eternal throne, He has still a perfect

⁶ Matt. xv. 25.⁷ Ps. xxv. 18.⁸ Luke xviii. 38.⁹ Ps. cxix. 107.¹ Heb. iv. 15.

sense of our infirmities, of all the mystery of human sorrow which He learned on earth, from the manger to the Cross. And it is specially in this connexion that St. Paul goes on to encourage us to pray. 'Let us therefore come boldly,' he says, 'unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.'² Out of this perfect love, knowledge, and sympathy, He perpetually intercedes for each of us according to our trial and our day. There can come upon us nothing which has not its counterpart and response in His perfect compassion. While He prays for us, He feels with us. To Him we may go as to one who is already pleading for us; and through Him we may draw nigh to God in His perfect merits, which He has given us for our own. They are ours, because they are His; because they are His, therefore hath He given them to us."

What though you cannot pray, He is praying for you. Only put yourself into His hands, and let Him plead for you; give yourself up to Him. If your will is one with His, what He asks will surely be what you would have desired for yourself, if you had had the power to ask or think. He knows all. He knows how bitter it seems to you, when your friends seem to fancy that your time is chiefly spent in prayer and meditation; when they seem to be relying on your prayers to bring down blessings on them. You know, that if you tried to explain your case to them, they would either think

² Heb. iv. 16.

that it was humility in you—that you would not own your saintliness; or they would think you in a very bad state; and almost needing a complete change of heart. Be not out of heart, “God is Judge Himself;”³ and “He knoweth your down-sitting and your uprising, and understandeth your thoughts afar off, and is acquainted with all your ways.”⁴ You will ask Him once and again, if it please Him, to give you the spirit of “prayer and of supplication.”⁵ If still He sees it necessary for your humiliation to deny it to you, then ask Him to bless the trial: at least to hear your breathing, your groaning, and to let you have a sense that He does hear it; and a sense of His presence, and His nearness.

But if for a season even this blessing should be denied to you, if you cannot feel that He is near, at least try to believe that it is so; if you must say, “Behold, I go forward, but He is not there; and backward, but I cannot perceive Him: on the left hand, where He doth work, but I cannot behold Him;”⁶ still, try to say also, “But He knoweth the way that I take: and when He hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold.” Yes, though you are in this hot furnace, the Refiner is sitting by, watching you closely. He notices each portion of dross as it falls away. You may not see Him, but He is sitting by, watching you most tenderly and patiently. He “puts your tears into His bottle,”⁷ although they be but the tears of the

³ Ps. l. 6.⁴ Ps. cxxxix. 2, 3.⁵ Phil. iv. 6.⁶ Job xxiii. 8—10.⁷ Ps. lvi. 8.

heart, and never expressed by the eyes. He sees them all, "not one of them is forgotten before Him."⁸ And even if you seem to yourself quite forsaken by God, it cannot be worse with you, than with Him, who said, "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?"⁹ At least He is with you in the deepest sympathy, and most tender pity. You say, "O my God, I cry in the day time, but Thou hearest not; and in the night season also I take no rest."¹ "Thou hast laid me in the lowest pit: in a place of darkness, and in the deep. Thine indignation lieth hard upon me, and Thou hast vexed me with all Thy storms. Lord, why abhorrest Thou my soul: and hidest Thou Thy face from me? I am in misery, and like unto him that is at the point to die."² But you can never say these words *alone*; you cannot feel, "never was sorrow like unto my sorrow,"³ or grief like unto my grief; for there is One who "bare your griefs, and carried your sorrows,"⁴ and who bears them *now*.

You would not dare to utter your temptations, lest you should be suggesting thoughts to some other sufferer, in whose mind they have as yet found no place. Do not fear to tell them all to Him. No temptations that can assault you can be strange to Him. "He suffered being tempted, that He might be able to succour them who are tempted."⁵ In those forty days in the wilderness

⁸ Luke xii. 6.⁹ Matt. xxvii. 46.¹ Ps. xxii. 2.² Ps. lxxxviii. 5, 6. 14, 15.³ Lam. i. 12.⁴ Isa. liii. 4.⁵ Heb. ii. 18.

every form of temptation came before Him. Do not fear to lay open all before Him, whom the devil tempted to cast himself from a pinnacle of the Temple; for He overcame the tempter then, that they who trust in Him might never be overcome by his temptations.

Very much in your case is owing to physical suffering, to extreme exhaustion, to having lost the power of judging justly, and seeing how things truly are. This, perhaps, seems poor consolation. Far better is it to say, you *cannot* understand yourself; do not try; you will but get into endless perplexities; do not reason; do not question yourself about your state before God; but lay it open, or rather lay open your heart, yourself, your will, before Him. Words are not necessary; He only wants you to offer *yourself*, and to let Him do with you as He sees best.

Sometimes it is a great help to use the prayers of the Church: the Collects, or the Service for the Visitation of the Sick. Do not think it must be formal to read it; and that it is a very formal thing to have a Service on purpose to read to the sick when they are visited. Would the Church have provided for *all* her members if she had furnished no Service for the Sick? Surely she could not, if she were a true mother, do otherwise. The more you study that Service, the more you will find it adapted to your wants. It teaches in a wonderful manner what are the trials, and temptations, and duties, and responsibilities, and blessings belonging

shall have your desire—you shall have work ; but with it you must have a constant test of your work, and of your motives. If you really wish to serve Me, then here is the work which I give you to do. Will you do it for the love which you bear to Me, because you love My service ? It will cost you very much suffering, but it is your own choice." Receive it then now—receive it all ; shrink from nothing ; do not murmur ; be "humbled under His mighty hand"⁹—humbled for the chastisement, for the *punishment*, but at the same time "give hearty thanks to Almighty God" for the work which He gives you to do. Do it as in His sight, as "unto the Lord, and not as unto man."¹ Do it cheerfully, thankfully, submissively, humbly, and take each little thing as part of it, and therefore as the expression of the will of God towards you, and so to be taken patiently, and penitentially, and silently, offering up your will to God as a "living sacrifice."² Be careful how you turn your blessings into burdens ; rejoice that "He has counted you worthy of this calling,"³ and if at the same time He calls you to suffer, believe that you could not do your work rightly or as safely, if you had not at the same time suffering to chasten and humble and subdue you ; to make you work all your works in God. It is *very* trying to feel day by day so crushed and oppressed, as if the life of your spirit were pressed out of it ; but beware how you murmur. Would

⁹ 1 Pet. v. 6.² Rom. xii. 1.¹ Eph. vi. 7.³ 2 Thess. i. 11.

not your active spirit feel it to be an hundred-fold greater trial if you were not suffered to work at all, but called to lie still?

Beware of murmuring, lest God should "answer you in your folly,"⁴ and give you the thing which you have vainly fancied you should prefer. Remember that your work comes only moment by moment, and as surely as God calls you to work, He gives the strength to do it. Do not think in the morning, "How shall I go through this day? I have such and such work to do, and persons to see, and I have not strength for it." No; you have not, for you do not need it. Each moment, as you need it, the strength will come, only do not look forward an hour; circumstances may be very different from what you expect. At any rate, you will be borne through each needful and right thing "on eagles' wings."⁵ Do not worry yourself with misgivings; take each thing quietly. Nothing is such a help to all people, but above all to the sick, as quietness of spirit, self-control, presence of mind. They may be cultivated to a high degree. We may have to lament that we never cultivated these things in early life—it will make the conflict harder now, but "with God nothing is impossible,"⁶ and He can "work in us to will and to do of His own good pleasure."⁷

Do you sometimes cry out, "O that I had wings like a dove! for then would I flee away, and be at rest."⁸ Be content; "there *remaineth* a rest"⁹ for

⁴ Prov. xxvi. 5.

⁷ Phil. ii. 13.

⁵ Isa. xl. 31.

⁸ Ps. lv. 6.

⁶ Luke i. 37.

⁹ Heb. iv. 9.

you, "incorruptible and undefiled, reserved in heaven for you;"¹ yet a little and you shall enter it; but "though it tarry wait for it;" for it "shall surely come, and not tarry."² In the meantime let us remember, that "we which have believed *do* enter into rest."³ Let us enter into God. He is our rest, and He says, "Come unto Me, all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest."⁴ Let us look upon all our burdens as laid upon us by Him; our yoke as His yoke, which is *light*, because He bears it with and for us, and takes off all the heaviest part of the weight from us. Let us look upon all our circumstances as the expression of His will, as His own voice speaking to us. This will give them a sacred character, and be the surest antidote to repining.

The opposite trial, of absence of all direct employment, of having no apparent work, is not less trying. It is impossible to say that one state is harder to bear than the other; for it depends entirely on the character, and circumstances, and habits of the sick person. To one, a life of activity, under any circumstances, may be less trying than a life of mere sickness. To another, work or responsibility are such burdens, that they would almost prefer doing nothing, to a state which involved these things. It is very foolish and sinful in sick people to compare their lots, and say, "How much harder mine is to bear than yours! You are quite

¹ 1 Pet. i. 4.

³ Heb. iv. 3.

² Hab. ii. 3.

⁴ Matt. xi. 28.

exempted from such and such trials, which are to me so very hard to bear. If I had such and such a thing, which you have, I could bear anything. Yours is such a useful life, mine so entirely useless." One may say, "You have work to do; if I had only that, all the rest would be easy to bear." Another, "How I envy you the quiet and rest that is given to you? My cross is the having none."

Why should we wonder if it be thus? for "the heart knoweth his own bitterness;"⁵ the heart alone, and He who searcheth the heart. Yes, each one's deepest grief is hidden from the eyes of his neighbour. Sickness no more likens trials, or likens character, than health does. If you craved rest when you had work given you to do; if you sometimes longed for sickness, to give you, as you fancied, leisure to serve God; if you often lamented that you had no time; groaned under the burden of your work, and did not do it with a free and glad heart; then do not wonder if you have the answer to your cravings—prayers perhaps they scarcely were—you wished for rest, and you have it. Seek to improve this season; do not spend your time in mere desultory desires for blessings, but earnestly ask God to "show you wherefore He contendeth with you."⁶ Listen for His answer. "Watch to see what He will say unto you, and what you shall answer when you are reproved."⁷ There is much for you to do even here; lie still, and He will be your teacher; but do not let the

⁵ Prov. xiv. 10.

⁶ Job x. 2.

⁷ Hab. ii. 1.

voice of discontent or sadness drown His voice. Ask Him to "open your ear to receive instruction."⁸ Answer all questionings, and silence all sad thoughts with, "*It is the will of God.*"

XVII

Anniversaries

THERE are but few people who have long known sickness or sorrow, who have not a feeling of dread of all anniversaries. The whole aspect of life is changed—the clouds seem to have gathered blackness—the bright spots in life are become fewer. Those days and seasons which once looked bright and joyous, and were welcomed when they returned, seem now to be "full of trouble;"⁹ they bring to remembrance all things that were bright and joyous, but which are so no longer. There was an unbroken family then; there were voices to be heard, which are heard now only in saddened memory; there was precious sympathy to be had then, joyful greetings, and sharings of our joy. Life looked bright, and the glad spirit counted from joy to joy, and expected only brighter joys and blessings yet to come. There was perhaps no thought of change then.

But years went on, and friend after friend passed into the world unseen; and made this life sadder

⁸ Prov. xxiii. 12.

⁹ Job. xiv. 1.

and more lonesome. Then sickness came, and life's aspect was wholly changed. And now the days and seasons return, and often seem but to mock your sorrow. Your birthday is near at hand! It used to be such a gladsome day, and now you dread its coming. And why? It tells that another year has passed, another long year of sickness, and yet you are here in your sick-room, just the same, no hope of being better, no brighter prospect before you. The morning comes; O! how it saddens you to hear the usual greetings, "Many happy returns!" rather would you wish that there should be no more returns; at any rate, you cannot believe that they can be *happy*. You think, "Why grieve me thus? O! do not remind me of my birthday; let the day pass unnoticed." You are mistaken; you would not like it to pass unnoticed; you would count it very unfeeling if no one noticed it, if no one cared about it. Do not turn away unlovingly, or as if you were annoyed, it is meant in true kindness; receive the greeting heartily, let it seem to give you pleasure; and then think whether there be no reason why it should be a glad day to you. Your birthday, what is that? The day that you were born into this world of sorrow. Yes! but is that all? Was it not the day in which life began in you, life which shall be eternal? Could you have the blessedness of everlasting life, if that life had not begun here? Do we not greatly err, in separating this life from that which is to come (as we express it)? Is it not all one? Life



The other way is to remember what Christmas is. The Birthday of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. The day in which He came into this world, and became "acquainted with grief."⁴ The day on which He began to take upon Him weakness, and suffering, and feebleness, and helplessness ; on which He began "Himself to bear our infirmities."⁵ The time when He began to know what loneliness, and want of sympathy, and of being misunderstood by others, meant. The day on which He came to redeem us from sin, to take away the curse ; that curse which involves sickness. Surely this is a day in which sick people should rejoice and be glad, and they should hail Christmas as a joyful day. And what if they cannot go to church, and cannot worship with others ; should they not be more independent of it on this than on any other day, because the thoughts which they need are brought so very home to them by all that external ; by the evergreens about their room, by the Christmas greetings, by the festivities around ? Let us then be glad and rejoice, and keep a happy Christmas. To some Lent is a sorrowful season ; they cannot go to church, they can make no outward difference, although it is a time of humiliation ; they say, that perhaps they ought to do something, and yet what can they do ? The whole season is a weight and a burden to them—a time of sadness. It is best generally not to attempt much ; not to be vexed because you can do so little ; some small thing you

⁴ Isa. liii. 3.⁵ Matt. viii. 17.

may find to do, enough to keep you mindful of the season. It may be some little abstinence (which of course you will consider it your duty not to suffer to interfere with the progress of your recovery ; or, if that is not a thing looked for, at least let it be something which will neither do you any harm, nor weaken you), it may be some little work of mercy done regularly ; or some little self-denial. What it should be each one must judge according to circumstances. A season of humiliation is especially one which should come home to your heart, not in sadness, but as a likeness to your own case, and fitted to remind you yet more of the meaning of sickness, and its humiliation.

The season ends and passes again into one of joy and thanksgiving. Have you no part in Easter ? Is it too glad for you ? O ! surely it is much every way to you. Passion-Week has spoken to you of His death who has redeemed death for you, and "opened the kingdom of Heaven to all believers." The glorious earnest of your resurrection follows this Holy Week. He rose from the dead, in sure token that we shall, if we "are found in Him,"⁶ rise also. Let us rejoice and give thanks, and rise out of the grave of all our sadness, and "sit with Him in heavenly places,"⁷ and go on our way refreshed and thankful, hoping that, when a few more Easters have passed, we shall have ended our suffering days, and shall "rise with Him unto life eternal."

In Ascension-Day and Whit-Sunday, and all the

⁶ Phil. iii. 9.

⁷ Eph. ii. 6.

Feast Days of the Church, we may find fresh reasons for rejoicing, and go on from step to step ; rising higher above the darkness and sorrow of life ; finding joy, or at any rate no painful sadness, in each anniversary, whether belonging to our own individual life, or to the Church universal.

Relative Trials

I

The Family and Friends

IN this life pleasures and pains are so closely connected, that often the things which bring the greatest enjoyment, are also the most fruitful sources of trial. Thus, although we derive our greatest earthly happiness from the kindness and love of our kindred and friends, yet they cause us trial. Their visits are often a source of great discontent and disappointment to sick people. Perhaps they are hurried and short, and before you have overcome the excitement of first seeing them, they have left you; or they may have been just at a time when you felt the least able to enjoy them, when you were very weak, or more than usually ill. Or your friends may have seemed absent, and you may have thought them cold and unkind, unsympathizing, uncaring for your circumstances; or their conversation may have been very desultory; they may have introduced a great variety

of subjects and dwelt upon none. You feel wearied and dissatisfied : you too well know that nothing is more exhausting to you than this kind of visit, especially if the talk has been much about *persons*, or mere passing events, or gossip. Or, your friends may have stayed with you much longer than you had strength for ; and though at first you enjoyed their company, at last your body grew so weary, that you lost your pleasure in it, if not in them.

In their kindness they may have urged you to make efforts which you know to be impossible ; and you may think that they do not understand you, and feel almost angry with them, and part with an estranged feeling, which, if it is not resisted, grows upon you. Or you may feel constrained in conversation, and that with almost every one there is some subject to be avoided, so that all intercourse is fettered. Alas ! it is too true ; but surely this is a trial which belongs to those in health fully as much as to you ; they come more into collision with others, and really suffer from this trial oftener than you do. But you are laid aside, you dwell on each thing, see it apart from the rest, and therefore it seems to you as if your lot was a very trying and isolated one.

The subject of society is a very difficult one to sick people. Some are quite overdone by the many persons whom they see ; it is an incessant wear upon their strength, a distraction to their minds, and takes up the best of their time. To some this is a great enjoyment—they like the dissipation. To

others it comes in the form of real, constant trial—a daily cross; if they could choose, and see only certain persons, and at certain times, they would indeed feel thankful. If circumstances make it plain that this is their *calling*, they have no right to try to alter it, or to groan under it; but should seek to learn how to receive each person as the present message sent to them by God for their profit, either to help and bless them, or to try their patience, and faith, and hope, and love; to exercise them in these things. Or the visitor may be sent to receive from the sick person ministries of consolation, or help, or warning. If it be plainly marked out that it is your duty to see them, that you are *called* to do so, then do not shrink from the suffering it may cost your body, but yield up that, as you have often done before, as a “living sacrifice,”¹ and ask God to bless the visit in whatever way He sees best, and so shall you hereby “entertain angels unawares.”²

Some people will tell you that you look particularly well, just when you are suffering the most. Others will say, “How much better you look than when I saw you last!” when you know and feel that you have been growing worse ever since. Some will say, “You look so much better than I expected to see you; your eyes are so bright, and you look so cheerful, you *cannot* surely be suffering as much as you say;” when you well know how great the effort is to be cheerful, and the enemy offers the thought to you, “Am I then to be punished for the

¹ Rom. xii. 1.

² Heb. xiii. 12.

very thing which I do, because it seems to me a Christian duty to do it?" No, not *punished*, but *tried* by it. Satan tempted Job, but God permitted it for his profit; thus it is with you. Do not be out of heart. No two persons will give you the same opinion of your appearance or state. Some will tell you that you look better, in order to cheer you; others, from ignorance; others, because they do not remember how you looked when they saw you last, and yet they think they must say something; others, from their own mood of mind at the time—if all things look bright to them, they fancy you look better, or the reverse. Others think that you are "only nervous," and that they can bring you out of it by this means; that you are deluding yourself and others, by your fancies about your health. People's words and opinions are often very teasing to the sick, and cause great searchings of heart, yet they really ought not to be heeded so much, or to cause distress. Looks, especially, are no real guides; people often look the best when they are the most ill, and the reverse. So much depends on natural appearance or complexion, and many other causes.

Do not think your friends unloving or unkind, if they never ask how you are, or show anxiety about you. Some people do this in mistaken kindness; they fancy that it does but bring your illness before you, or puts you to pain, or annoys you. It is true that some sick people have a great dislike to *being* asked how they are, and from various reasons.

Sometimes it is from a mere feeling of despondency—almost of despair. They have only the same, or a worse tale to tell, and they hate the tale. Sometimes it is from a dislike of being reminded of their state. Sometimes it is because they fancy that it shows an absence of selfishness not to speak of self. Sometimes it is that they do not like that their illness should be known or talked of, and will not therefore put people in possession of any means of doing so. Some shrink from all notice, or have complaints that they wish to conceal. All these are morbid feelings; and the last two often lead to deception and equivocation. It is best to answer briefly and simply. It is easy to see whether people ask for form's sake, or because they take a real interest in you. Give to the former as brief answers as are consistent with courtesy. Answer the questions of the latter even as they are asked, kindly and freely; and as soon as you can politely, change the conversation. Do not get into a habit of talking much of yourself, or of your complaints. It is very injurious, and produces a habit of self-contemplation, which makes you burdensome to others, and will be sure to grow upon you.

There are times when it is good to do so, with those who can well understand us—can analyze our feelings for us—can advise us; and who will rebuke us when we are self-indulgent.

Try to cultivate self-control in all your words, and looks, and actions. Do not show the pain you are suffering, more than you can help, in your

countenance ; it is surprising how much habit and discipline may do on this point. Be very careful also how you *describe* your pain. Never exaggerate it in any way ; for this is sure to increase its reality to yourself, and also it is a sinful thing. Conceal your pain from general observers as much as you can, in word, look, and action.

Do not count your friends unloving if they reprove you, or even if they seem to you to rebuke you sharply ; receive their reproofs as the truest token of love and faithfulness ; " Faithful are the wounds of a friend."³ Would they show their love by " suffering sin upon you !"⁴ Your first impulse may be to resent it, or to think it very unkind and unfeeling, to add to your suffering, instead of trying to lessen it ; or you may be tempted to answer fretfully and angrily ; if you do so, you will probably deprive yourself of the blessing another time. Sick persons are sometimes strangely jealous of any one thinking it possible that they can be in a wrong state of mind, or are indulging in wrong tempers. Sometimes they think that every one ought to bear with whatever faults they have ; that they have excuse enough in their pain, or in the trials of illness. Will this be a plea, think you, that you should dare to urge at the " great and dreadful day of judgment ?" How then can you safely urge it now ? Is not the present time the season of preparation for that awful hour ? Is not your sickness sent to help you in the preparation ? Would you

³ Prov. xxvii. 6.

⁴ Lev. xix. 17.

then refuse this good gift of God, by making it an excuse for sin? No; surely you will seek to be more and more thankful to those friends who imitate the example of the Church, and teach that exhortation is the true comfort. Do not measure the love of your friends by their words, or always by their deeds; but take each person naturally, according to their characters, and expect nothing from them but what is reasonable; which is to be judged of by their habits. Do not expect them to depart from these for you, or look upon their not doing so as any personal slight.

If you are in the house with many persons, some of them may rarely come to see you, unless some special occasion brings them. Others may come daily, or yet more frequently. Do not judge them by these things, but by what you know of their character as a whole. Seek to be as little pained by these things as you possibly can attain to; which will be far beyond what you can imagine, until you try to learn and practise this self-discipline. Do not express your disappointment at friends not coming more frequently to you, excepting to those persons to whom you see that your doing so gives pleasure, and makes them feel that you like their society; at any rate, do not show that it has given you pain. For if your friends are either shy, or reserved, or indolent, and these have been the causes of their absence, you will but drive them further from you, and hinder the pleasantness of intercourse when you have it, and give an awk-

wardness and constraint both to yourself and to them.

Be careful not to find fault, or to be displeased, if your friends do not tell you of everything that happens in the family, or that interests them.

Believe that it is their wish to give you pleasure ; but it is with them even as you complain of its being with you ; they forget what they intended to have said or done, just at the right time, when they are with you. Neither think them unkind, if they do not always propose to you to see people when they come. You cannot expect always and at all times to be borne in mind. With the kindest and best friend this will not be, excepting in very rare instances. It will spoil all your intercourse with your friends, and be as much for your as for their trial, if you expect such a thing. Be very thankful always, and show yourself pleased whenever any kindness, however trivial, is shown to you, when in any way you are brought into the range of their pleasures and pursuits ; always accept each thing cheerfully and pleasantly ; nothing is so likely to secure a repetition of the pleasure. If it be not quite agreeable or convenient to you, or what you like, try to hide that, and accept the good will of your friend.

When friends come to visit you, that also has its trials. Sometimes you may have made a great effort to see them, and in body and mind be painfully conscious of that effort ; you may feel that you have intended kindness thereby ; or you may have

done some act of kindness, and it may fall quite flat. Do not be out of heart, such trials are common to man; and sick people cannot expect to be exempted from them. Or you may begin a conversation, hoping to find it a subject of great interest to your friend, as perhaps it is to you; or it may be some subject which is deeply interesting to you at the time, and it may be received coldly or abstractedly, or dropped at once, as if it had no meaning in it. This is a great trial, but receive it as such; do not let it make you morose or discontented, or selfishly shut up in yourself, resolved to venture forth no more, lest you should but suffer pain. Do not say, I have enough trial without this. I think that they might remember that I am ill, cut off from the pleasures of society, from general intercourse. No, you have *not* enough, or this would not have been added. It is but a sample of life that you receive; you are tried thus less frequently than they who come in contact with many people. Remember this, "Charity beareth all things."⁵ Remember, too, that mere sickness does not exercise us in many needful points. It is these additions that try us, and are "to humble us."⁶ Besides, you say that you wish to have more part in life; do not shrink then from a share in these "lesser sharpnesses of our common griefs." Do not think your friends unreasonable if they expect too much from you. Perhaps they expect, or they seem to you to do so, that they shall never see any indication

⁵ 1 Cor. xiii. 7.⁶ Deut. viii. 2.

of discontent, irritability, or want of cheerfulness in you ; they think that illness is sent to do you good, and they expect to see the good crop springing up in what is really the seed-time. If they are true friends, they may perhaps rebuke you, not, as it seems to you, very reasonably and gently. Either you grow angry, or else you say in your heart, "How unreasonable : why surely sickness does but stir up all the evil that is in me, not subdue it. It is very hard when I am struggling all the day long, that I should meet with such unreasonable treatment." Truly it is very trying ; but is it quite as unreasonable as it seems to you ?

If your friend has not been in your circumstances, can he know them ? He reasons on the common belief that sick people ought to be gentler and more loving, and to show forth the fruits of the Spirit more than others do.

To a great extent this is a truth ; but, like most statements, it is not the whole truth.

Do not think them unkind, if they urge you to make efforts which you feel to be quite beyond your power. Do not resent it as an unkindness, but believe that it was intended for your real good ; perhaps from the fear of your falling into greater depths of illness, or of your becoming a confirmed invalid, or, what is worse, a nervous patient. Listen to them quietly and patiently ; say, gently, that you have often made such attempts, and always find yourself the worse for them, but that you will gladly try again if they wish it ; or you will ask

your physician's advice about it the first opportunity. If you are really conscious that you *are* doing the utmost that you have power to do, then be content to be misunderstood, and take it patiently. Tell it all to Him who never misunderstands, and who reads your heart.

Do not expect them to tell you every little thing that you would like to hear. Perhaps they have mentioned these things already to other people; they may not recollect that they have not also to you; or their minds may be much occupied; or they may have the full intention of telling you something, or bringing you some letter, or some new book, or something that they think will interest you, but it escapes their memory just at the time they go to you. Believe in the love of your friends, and rest in that, it will be the greatest help to you. "Judge not, therefore, that ye be not judged."⁷

II

Letters

SOMETIMES letters are a source of discontent and disquiet to the sick. We have spoken of the pleasure of receiving them, and how welcome they are; but sometimes if a friend does not speak as much as the sick person would like of his illness—or does not seem to enter into it—or seems

⁷ Matt. vii. 1.

wholly to misunderstand the case, and thinks he can go out when he is longing to do so but cannot—or thinks that he ought to try to make this and many other exertions—or perhaps judges him harshly; then letters become a source of irritation, and it is well if alienation of heart be not produced. Now all these things surely are sent to try us, and are intended for this purpose. Nevertheless we should bear in mind that we ought not to be angry or even annoyed; that our friend meant nothing but kindness, but being at a distance, and unable to see us, could not possibly know our actual state; and wrote, either judging from our own statements, the statements of others, or from having formed an imaginary picture of what state such and such symptoms would probably produce. Even as you do not like to be harshly judged, do not judge your friends harshly. Be very careful not to answer in an irritated tone, or to let an unkind word escape your pen. If you feel unkindly, do not write at once, wait until the first feeling of vexation and its sad after-thoughts have subsided. Ask the God of love to make you like-minded with Himself, and to make this a time for denying yourself, and to enable you to hide from your friend that you have done so. You may naturally and quietly tell your state; but do not try to make it appear worse or different from what it really is, for that would be but another way of expressing your annoyance. Sick people often expect their friends to write to them as frequently and as fully as if they

wrote answers to each letter, which is unreasonable.

It is not likely that people in health should fully enter into the feelings of sick persons about letters; they feel so cut off from intercourse and life, that they often have a craving for letters, but a great disinclination to, or inability for, answering them. A letter steals into the room so silently and quietly that it does not fatigue as visitors sometimes do; it gives great pleasure to find that friends remember us, and do not give over expressing it, even when we cannot acknowledge the cheering they have been to us. People often say, "I do not write to you, because I know how weak you are, and that it only teases you."

This is a great mistake; sick people need letters more, in order to keep up their connexion with others, and value them far more than people in health. If they fear to fatigue them, let them say that they do not expect answers, and will write again, in spite of not receiving any. Let them never reproach sick people for not writing, or think it any proof of want of affection; and, in like manner, let the sick remember how often their friends abstain from writing to them from truly kind motives; and so let them never indulge in hard or unreasonable or unloving thoughts of them.

Few people know the full enjoyment of a letter, or a message, even those often uncared for messages of love and remembrance, until they have been ill for a long time.

III

Visits of Clergymen

ANOTHER source of discontent often arises from the visits of Clergymen. You may be living in a large parish where it is not possible for your pastor to visit you often, he has so large a fold and so many sheep to look after. Remember that you are not the only one; that his time is greatly taken up. Be thankful whenever he visits you; and be thankful also when he does not, if you know that it is because he is visiting others, who have fewer means of instruction, and have had but few opportunities of obtaining it.

Or, you may be living in a parish where the people are rarely visited. If so, your case is not peculiar; you have no cause to complain as if you were worse off than others. Pray for yourself and them, that the case may become otherwise, if so it please God.

Or, the Clergyman may visit you, and the conversation may be entirely desultory,—about persons, or on general subjects.

Or, he may be very shy and reserved; he may deeply feel that he does not know how to address you; he may have an earnest desire to do it, but feeling this difficulty may make his manner cold or formal. You can say nothing; you had questions you wanted to ask; advice to get from him;

but you are straitened ; you can ask nothing ; he leaves you, and you say in your heart, with bitter disappointment, that your “ teachers *are* removed into a corner.”⁸

Or, he may know nothing personally of illness, and may not have much considered the wants of the sick, which may be learned by an earnest study of the “ Service for the Visitation of the Sick.” He thinks, perhaps, that all the wants of sick people are alike, their trials all coming under the same class, and that what he says to one will equally apply to every case. Perhaps he is as much surprised that his words do not seem to suit you, as you are that he says nothing which comes home to your heart. He may have a method in his visits, which you would interrupt if you asked any question. You see that it is not agreeable to him, it breaks the thread of his discourse, which he cannot easily resume. He has adopted this course with the sick, considerably believing it to be the plan most likely to edify them. Even when, before he left, he proposed to read a chapter from Holy Scripture, and then to pray with you, he did not perceive your weakness ; he did not notice that you could not now listen or follow, as once you could ; that you needed that the length of the Scripture read, and of the Prayer, should be adapted to your physical condition, if you were to have part in it. Perhaps you were unequal to having more than two or three Collects repeated, the words of which

⁸ Isa. xxx. 20.

you would be so familiar with, as to require only the one effort of joining in the Prayer, without considering also what words were said, and whether you *could* offer them. You expected much from this visit, and you are disappointed, and feel more alone and unhelped than before.

Or, the pastor may think something that you say is erroneous, and spend the time of his visit in combating the error, rather than in leading you into truth.

Or, he may expect you to respond to certain words and phrases. You are afraid to express yourself thus; the words do not exactly convey your meaning; you give a wrong impression of yourself; you say that you cannot use such words. He is dissatisfied: perhaps tells you that you have not "the root of the matter in you;"⁹ or that you "have departed from first principles." You are discouraged; perhaps you really meant the same thing that he did, but you felt that you had often used such words without any meaning; that sickness had especially revealed this sin to you; that you could not truly express yourself just so, though you felt as if in reality you meant the same thing, but were perhaps afraid of appearing better than you feel yourself to be. Or, it may be that you were confused or frightened, because you had not been accustomed to be asked many questions about your own inmost thoughts. You may have had many things in your mind which you wished to speak of, or questions

⁹ Job. xix. 28.

to ask, but you felt that you should not be understood.

Or, you may have an entirely formal visit, and be made to feel that it is so completely a matter of business, that you find it hard to take any part in it.

If you are in the house of a clergyman, you will perhaps see many clergymen, but will not often, probably, be much better off for pastoral visits. Generally they will tell you that they do not come to "*visit*" you, but merely as a friend; that they know how well you are already provided for in your own house, and much better visited than you can be by them. It is a natural supposition. But when it is remembered that if you are one of the family of a clergyman, and he has much to do, he will rarely have time to bestow on you; he thinks that he can see you at any time; but when you see him there are often so many personal and domestic subjects to be spoken of, that all the very little time is absorbed in them. You know that he is ever ready at hand; in any emergency you would ask his help, but you, of all others, perhaps the best know how overtasked his strength is—it would be a mere pain to you to add any weight to his burden. Moreover, it rarely happens that members of a family can so throw aside other relationships as easily to merge all in the Shepherd and the sheep. They may have delightful spiritual intercourse, but not exactly pastoral. Therefore do not expect what in fact cannot be.

What you want is, to be encouraged by your

pastor to lay your troubles and difficulties before him, and to receive his counsel and help. You want to feel that you shall be understood; that you may have perfect confidence in him, without any fear that your words will ever be heard by any one else. You want to meet with ready sympathy, not a dry, cold, abstracted hearing, or a misunderstanding of your words. You want to feel that whatever you say which is wrong he will point out to you, but not that he should *suppose* errors in you, which do not exist; not talk to you of "the errors of the present day," and warn you against them, but point out your *own* errors to you. You want to have sin pointed out to you; to have plain honest truth spoken; to be *exhorted* more than *comforted*—not merely to be told of the *blessings* of sickness, and that "whom the Lord *loveth* He chasteneth,"¹ but to learn that it is *chastisement*. You want to be directed how, *practically*, to "believe in the Holy Catholic Church and the Communion of Saints;" to be shown how truly you are still a member of the Church—not cut off, though a "sick member," still "preserved in the unity of the Church." You want to be instructed as to the best way of joining all the members of the Church, and how to find that the Services are for the sick, as well as for those who can go to church. You feel that there are "green pastures and still waters,"² and you want to be led into them. You want to be told what is your "part and duty," and how so to "fulfil your course"³ that you shall

¹ Heb. xii. 6.² Ps. xxiii. 2.³ Acts iii. 25.

indeed let your "joint supply"⁴ that which is appointed for it to do.

A great help to profiting by the visits of clergymen is, to remember that they are God's ministers"⁵—His priests; that they come to us in another character to ordinary men. "They are called of God as was Aaron."⁶ Like Moses, they may be "slow of speech and of slow tongue."⁷ They are "men of like passions with ourselves;"⁸ yet have they a special work and calling, which fits them to be teachers, and the more willing we are to learn of them, and to "remember them who have the rule over us, and submit ourselves;"⁹ the more shall we find that they do bring us a message, to which we "shall do well if we take heed."¹ We may learn much from those whose words are not pleasing to our taste. We pass by many excellent words because they do not seem to suit us at the time; we are provoked with them because they do not suit us. The day may come when they will return to us, and "leave a blessing behind"² them.

⁴ Eph. iv. 16.

⁵ Rom. xiii. 6.

⁶ Heb. v. 4.

⁷ Exod. iv. 10.

⁸ Acts xiv. 15.

⁹ Heb. xiii. 7.

¹ 2 Pet. i. 19.

² Joel ii. 14.

IV

Medical Advice and Medical Visits

THERE is another trial which often gives rise to feelings of great discontent in the minds of the sick. It shows itself in two opposite forms; sometimes they fancy because their friends let them go on without seeming to wish that they should have any additional medical advice, or any change of medical men, therefore they do not care for their recovery, or wish to try all means. This fancy preys upon their spirits, and gives a feeling of deep dissatisfaction. Were they to speak the truth, or rather, if they knew their own hearts, they would see how much they themselves are wishing to try some new treatment, or to have some new doctor. Visitors often propose and urge them to try some one in whom they have special confidence; perhaps they stir up the desire in their minds, and even produce a feeling of dissatisfaction with their present attendant. The sick person ponders it in his heart, and wonders why his friends are so heedless and indifferent about it. Why it is their love and kindness, generally speaking, that makes them so; they see that little or nothing can be done, and they kindly forbear to tease you with asking you to try fresh plans, which may only give you much pain, and end in disappointment. They think it kinder to leave you merely to the soothing remedies which

are generally resorted to when all others are ineffectual, than to put you to the pain of undergoing many of the same remedies that have been tried already, without success. If you wish to see some new physician, propose it yourself, at least tell some friend that you think you should like to have some advice, if they see no objection; but remember always when you are doing so, how great a risk you are running; his advice may not suit you at all, it may merely add to your suffering. You cannot expect that a stranger should take the interest in you that one would who had long watched your case and known you; his manner may be trying to you—his opinion only cause you fresh pain. Weigh all these things thoroughly; some sick people are constantly wishing for a change of medical advisers; and what do they gain by it? A succession of disappointments and trials. Medicines given and rejected as failures, hope after hope arising, and as often failing.

In an early stage of sickness it is very desirable to have more than one opinion; but when all right means have been tried, it is a far more peaceful plan to keep to some one medical man, whoever suits you best, and not to seek for, or hanker after any more opinions. There are stages in the disease in which it may be well, if your usual attendant approves it, to have a fresh opinion, but the less frequently the better. Some sick people have a foolish jealousy of any new opinion. If friends wish and propose it, it is a duty at once to fall in

with their wishes, and give them the satisfaction of having tried all reasonable means. If they do not care about it, then you may be content and thankful, but do not be displeased if they express their wish that you should see some fresh person; take it as a proof of kindness. Do not be discontented, or think that they tease you needlessly.

Sometimes sick persons are discontented with their medical man because he finds no means of relieving them. But surely this is not a just cause, for we may be sure that, for his credit's sake, every honest medical man will desire to cure a patient; and if he cannot do this, at least to give all the relief in his power.

Sometimes sick people fancy that medical men do not understand their particular case. Perhaps they may not, for they are working in the dark. But is this just cause for discontent? Could not He who opened the eyes of the blind, open their eyes to see your case, and give them understanding to treat it? Ask some friends, on whom you can rely, if it seems to them as it does to you; and if their opinion agrees with yours, and they advise that you should have another opinion, you will gladly let it be so. But if this cannot be, then take it as *His* will that you should not be relieved, as *His* will that you must suffer still. This will soften it to you, and enable you to receive the trial meekly.

Sometimes we cannot but feel that medical men do misunderstand our characters; they urge those to exertion whose whole mind and spirit is actively

at work; and to whom stillness is greater suffering and trial than are any of their remedies; by doing so, they increase the restlessness and discontent which is in their patients. Or, sometimes they let those remain idle, who need to be roused and stirred up. It must be so, for they see but little of their patients, are rarely acquainted with them before their illness, and therefore cannot know their natural characters. They hear only our tales of illness, which we feel it necessary to tell them fully; and so they fancy that these are our thoughts at all times—the food of our minds, and that we need to be brought out of what seems to them morbid. Therefore in kindness they urge us, but indiscriminately: for they have cultivated knowledge of disease more than knowledge of human nature; and look at the countenance as the index of disease, rather than of the mind within.

Another of the great trials which medical men often cause their patients, is the treating them (not medically, perhaps, but morally) as “nervous,” “merely nervous.” Do they not know, we sometimes ask, that they *can* say nothing more hopeless and discouraging to sick people?

If they mean by it, it is nothing; do not think of it, try to forget it; surely these words will not produce the effect they intend. Instead of this, if they said, “These are morbid feelings, you must struggle against them, they can be overcome; it will cost you a great and continued struggle, but you will be rewarded for doing so;” there would be hope

and strength in such language, and the work thus given you to do would be very useful. The sick person would value the friend who would speak truth to him. On the other hand, the effect of saying, "it is only nervous," is to prevent the sufferer from again uttering such thoughts, or any that could be so construed ; to make him feel that his physician does not understand him, and to shake his confidence wholly in him, even when there is no ground for it. Yet he ought to remember, that the physician merely used common language, and did not intend to cause so much pain.

If, on the other hand, he means by "merely nervous," or "it is a nervous pain," really an affection of the nerves, why then his words are sad and hopeless ; for no pains are so peculiarly trying, so inexplicable, so incurable. But if this be the meaning of the words, then surely it is better to be told ; better to know the whole sad truth ; to be able to face it all, and see what it involves ; and to seek how to meet it, in the strength of the Lord.

Do not trouble your physician with questions about his opinion of your state, the nature of the disease, or its probabilities. You will gain nothing by doing so ; he will perhaps argue from it, that you spend a great deal of your time in thinking about it. Except when any particular changes occur in the disease, he knows nothing fresh, and can tell you nothing but what he has already told you. You may tempt him to give you some most unwelcome opinion as to its duration, or your nervous-

ness. You had better go on patiently from week to week, asking no questions, just living in the day and for the day, and feeling that after all it is not in your physician's hands ; but that it is God who "maketh sore, and bindeth up : He woundeth, and His hands make whole."³

Always answer all questions asked by medical men clearly, distinctly, truly, and without any reservations ; but the less you volunteer about your bodily feelings the better, unless there are any necessary things to be mentioned which these questions have not elicited. In this case describe them in as few words as you can. Do not conceal any symptoms from them. It is a mistake that there is any delicacy in doing so. It may be a great trial to you to speak of some things, and to submit to some treatment ; but take it as a trial, it is a part of your discipline, and a necessary and humbling one. Do not make objections to trying remedies. It is your duty to try whatever is suggested. Do not say that you cannot take this or that medicine. Try it again, for under your present circumstances the effect may be quite different to what it was at a former time. You owe it to your physician to try anything that he thinks may be useful to you.

The manner in which medical men often talk to the friends of the sick, causes much trial to sick people ; speaking of them as nervous ; saying that they must be treated as such ; urged to make exer-

³ Job v. 18.

4. To lay it open before God ; to tell Him how very sorely it distresses you : that you cannot overcome it, but that you hate yourself for it. Go on doing so continually. Say—"Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me."³ But if not, then ask Him to teach you to say, "Thy will be done." Then take it as His will, and that will change the nature of the trial : bear it submissively, until He sees fit to remove it from you.

There may be many cases in which the nurse that has been hired may be really very unsuitable, therefore it is better to speak to some friend about it : and if it seems to them in the same light as to yourself, it is best to make a change as soon as possible.

We may receive the most helpful discipline to ourselves from the various characters of our attendants, if we resolve to do so ; otherwise they will but fret us, and stir up the evil which is in us. We need not seek out those which will try us. On the contrary, it is far better for them and for us, that we should choose those who seem likely to suit us. In every character we shall find something not quite according to our liking ; let us take this as wholesome discipline, and use it as such. Are you very impatient and impetuous by nature ? Your attendant may be very valuable to you, and yet she may be a continual chastisement to you by reason of her slowness. It is very discouraging to her, and bad for you, that you should be constantly chiding

³ Matt. xxvi. 39. 42.

her for it, or trying to hurry her. Take it as a means of correcting the evil that is in you, and it will surely prove so : few things can so constantly remind you of your besetting sin, and warn you to correct it. Especially watch over your tone and manner, for your greatest danger is with your attendants. We are apt to give sad license to ourselves with servants and nurses ; not merely forgetting how much we must try them and pain them, but also what an example we are setting to them, and how we are weakening, if not destroying, the influence that we might have, and *ought* to have, over them. What if they are slow, or obtuse, or wayward, or misunderstand us, or seem indifferent, or are forgetful, or selfish—not willing to be put out of their own ways? Let us ask ourselves, are we never so too? Have we never found any of the faults in ourselves that we complain of in them? Have we tried to the utmost, by example, and kindness, and gentle rebuke, and patience, and forbearance, to overcome their faults in them? Do we never try their tempers, and call out the evil which is in them? Have we asked God to teach us how to help them, and to bear with them, and to lead them aright? Do we ask this day by day, and whenever we come in contact with them? Many persons will speak sharply or impatiently to an attendant, who would not do so to an equal. Perhaps there is no check more wholesome than watching one's words and ways to servants, for they are with us when no one else is, and at the times

we are least on our guard ; when only His eye seeth, and His ear heareth, who will call us to account for *these*, as well as all "things done in the body."⁹ You will also be careful not to burden your attendant unnecessarily ; not to ring your bell with unreasonable frequency, or when you can do without the thing you wish for : perhaps it is something which can wait until she next comes up-stairs. You will be careful never to disturb her rest at night unnecessarily, to consider her health and comfort ; to allow her proper exercise in the open air, which those who attend closely on the sick especially need. If she has been up in the night, you will take care that she has rest in the day. You will always consider her time of meals, and not let it be needlessly interrupted. You will always try to show to her that you are satisfied and grateful to her—for those who wait on the sick need a great deal of patience. If she does not please you, it is best *occasionally* to speak decidedly, but very kindly to her ; and not to be constantly making little complaints, and finding fault with each thing ; for that is so discouraging, that you cannot expect her to do right. You will resolve also to resist all desires, which, though perhaps not wrong in themselves, may be very inconvenient or expensive to your friends, but which they may not like to deny you. Remember, "Deny *thyself* ; take up the Cross,"¹ are your Master's words to you.

⁹ 2 Cor. v. 10.

¹ Matt. xv. 24.

VI

Giving Trouble

DO not distress yourself by thinking that you “merely give trouble.” How often sick people say so! How much oftener they think so! and the thought is indeed a distressing one. It is a mercy if it proceeds no further; if it does not degenerate into thinking that our friends think the thoughts that we have had in our own minds—that they think us troublesome—that they are growing weary of us. These thoughts offer themselves to every sick person. It is right that you should constantly endeavour to bear in mind how great the trial is to those around. The more tenderly they love you, the greater it must be. Besides the sorrow that your sickness causes to your friends, there is a peculiar sense of depression which pervades a household during sickness, especially if it be a short and dangerous one. Generally speaking, the habits of the family are broken in upon, and in some degree changed; one is missed from the accustomed place in the circle, and from all family meetings. When any of the family have been out of doors, still to find sickness meeting them on their return, gives a sadness to them; they can never take breath from it, as it were, for it is pressing on them still. Let not the thought of this depress you, but seek that it may make you

more loving, and gentle, and considerate, and thankful to all those about you ; and let it live during the rest of your life in your grateful remembrance.

There are many ways in which you may avoid giving trouble, if you are really earnestly determined to do so, and are not merely indulging in morbid thoughts and words. You may be constantly avoiding it, without any appearance of doing so.

You will of course be careful, as much as possible, to let your hours and habits fall in with those around : taking your meals at the same time, when it is possible ; making your free and leisure times those which will best suit other people. As little as possible shutting out the family from your room, or making a favour of receiving them, or showing that you feel them to be in the way. They come to you in kindness—receive them kindly and cheerfully.

Perhaps it may help you, when the fear of giving trouble distresses you, clearly to set these things before your mind :

1. Is it really a dislike of giving trouble, unmixed with other feelings? Is there no pride in it? Is there no feeling of disliking to receive all, and to give nothing? Is there no dislike of dependence, and striving for independence?

2. The message is to your friends as well as to yourself. You must not fear lest you should seem the messenger of evil tidings. And even supposing that they look upon it as an intrusion on

their comfort, putting out household arrangements, and destroying domestic enjoyment; then they need the message but the more, and you must be content to be the bearer of it.

3. You did not bring yourself into these circumstances: it was the will of God. He is too wise to order His discipline, that it shall bless one, and injure another, of His children. Be assured that what is sent to bless you and to teach you, is sent to bless and to teach all the household also. Do not then say that you are in the way; are causing so much expense to be incurred, that you give so much trouble, and yet you cannot put forth a hand or foot to help. You are God's messenger. Leave it to Him to apply the message to each one. But do not mar it by trying to persuade yourself or others, that it is *your* message, and that you bring it very unwillingly.

The greeting which the Church appoints that clergymen visiting the sick should give, is—"Peace be to *this house, and to all that dwell in it.*" The Son of Peace is in it. He has sent a messenger to you; do not be forgetful to entertain this stranger, for hereby some have "entertained angels unawares."²

4. That lot only is good which God appoints. He has placed you where you are; He has appointed all your circumstances, even to the most minute. It is exactly adapted to your character: nothing else would do so well, or teach you so much.

² Heb. xiii. 2.

Answer every suggestion of Satan, who would tempt you to believe that these are *not* the best circumstances; that others would have suited your character better; with “ ‘Get thee behind me, Satan,’³ God has placed me here—*It is the will of God.*”

When any one suggests to you that they wish it were otherwise with you, say, “It is the will of God,”—“the only wise God,”⁴—“our Father.”⁵ When your own heart tempts you, no matter how small the thing it is which it would persuade you to wish otherwise, say, “It is the will of God;” the “God of love.”

³ Matt. xvi. 23.

⁴ 1 Tim. i. 17.

⁵ Matt. vi. 9.

Temptations

I

That no one can Sympathize

ALTHOUGH you must ever look upon sickness as a hidden state, fully known only to its wayfarers, beware how you say, "No one *can* sympathize with me, no one understands me." For, besides that it has a most chilling effect upon those to whom it is said, throws them back, however much they have wished to sympathize, and eventually brings upon you the sad reality, it has also a most injurious effect upon yourself; and produces isolation and loneliness of heart. Few stop at "No one *can* sympathize:" next comes, "No one *will* sympathize;" in other words, "I will not *let* them, I will shut myself up."

Few say this in words; they lay the blame on other people, and think themselves very hardly dealt with. But if they reject sympathy, and always say when it is offered, "You do not understand me, you cannot enter into my trial;" by degrees the

attempt to offer sympathy will naturally be withdrawn; which bitter trial they have brought wholly on themselves by their own free choice.

If you see in your friends the wish to sympathize, accept it thankfully, even if you feel that it reaches but a short way into your need, and never sounds the depth of your trial. Be assured that by degrees, if you cherish it, it will increase, and adapt itself, by use, more to your needs. At first it may be very awkward. The person offering it may feel this as painfully as you can do; therefore feel for *them*; give them *your* help, and you will ere long have *theirs*.

Neither say, "in many things you can sympathize, but not in this particular trial." It may be so; most things must be felt in order to be fully understood: but do not say so, it is so discouraging. Tell it all to Him who never fails in understanding, in sympathy, or in love.

Kindness is always precious: do not throw it back; accept each little token of it cheerfully, thankfully.

Sometimes it may be something which you did not wish just at that time. Never mind; accept the kindness, and keep that to yourself: do not give your friend the disappointment, even if it cause you some pain. Having shown yourself to be really grateful, you may courteously ask not to have the same thing brought to you again, if there be any good reason for doing so. Do not assume that things are your *right*; but courteously and

thankfully receive each kindness, *as a kindness*; each gift, a flower, or whatsoever it be, cheerfully and gratefully. Remembering always, that all the kindnesses and love of friends, are gifts from the God of love.

II

Irritability

IT is a great help and blessing to a sick person, to be told when they manifest any of the irritability which is constantly causing them such bitter conflicts, and with which either they are maintaining, or they ought to be, one unbroken, arduous fight. Sometimes without any apparent cause, it will suddenly seem to seize their whole frame, and every nerve will sympathize with the wretched feeling. God only knows how long it has been suppressed, or how often it has offered itself before, and been earnestly resisted. The temptation has been repressed, perhaps, for hours; no trace of irritability has been seen by others. Some trifling thing occurs—perhaps it may be so trifling that you hardly feel it necessary to watch against it; it may be a door shut violently, or not shut at all, or held in the hand for some minutes, whilst another person outside is spoken to, and you have the double annoyance of expectation and of hearing a whispering sound in which you have no part; or it

may be a sudden noise—something carelessly let fall; or something forgotten to be done, which you had particularly wished or desired: or, some one suddenly touching you, or your bed, or shaking the bed continually whilst sitting by it; or coming into your room unexpectedly, and in a bustle. These, or a thousand other things, too small to name, but *not* too small to *feel*, may have caused a sudden expression of irritability. You may have been exerting yourself beyond your strength—the last bit of strength may have been spent, it seems to you, just as this new demand for it came upon you. It was too much—you failed. It might be a mere physical expression of nervous suffering, and not counted as sin by Him who is “very pitiful.” But your friends can rarely distinguish. How should they? for can you always, in your own case, distinguish between these things which seem so much alike? No, surely you cannot; therefore do not count them unreasonable or unkind if they reprove you—it is a proof of true love in them, for it is often an unthankful task. See to it that it is not so in your case.

The effort to repress irritability sometimes gives a pained expression to the voice and the countenance which is easily misunderstood, and therefore should be brought under control as much as possible. Sick persons who are seeking to “bring every thought into captivity,”¹ will seldom utter an irritable word, perhaps scarcely think an irritable

¹ 2 Cor. x. 5.

thought, without an instant consciousness of it. O then, what a conflict follows! What, is this sin cleaving to me still? Is it not yet subdued? Must I suffer from it for ever? How long shall I go on to dishonour my Lord and Master, and to be so unlike Him who "did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth?"² Have all my struggles been a lie? Have all my prayers been in vain, and unheard? No; they have not been in vain—they have all been heard, and are answered hour by hour. He "puts your tears into His bottle. Are they not in His Book?"³

"He tells your flittings," and He it is that has so often, that does each moment that you are upheld, "keep you from falling."⁴ It is by His grace that you are kept so often; and if you do but "hold you fast by God,"⁵ you will less and less frequently slide. He will "keep the doors of your lips,"⁶ that they may not transgress against Him. But have you not also prayed Him to "humble you, and prove you, and show you what is in your heart?"⁷ And is not this the fulfilment of your prayer? You need to be shown some of the evils of your heart. Do not then be out of heart when you see them; but ask Him, whensoever He conducts you into the "chambers of His imagery,"⁸ always to go there with you Himself, lest you should be overwhelmed with the vision. Be careful to look

² 1 Pet. ii. 22.

⁵ Ps. lxxiii. 27.

³ Ps. lvi. 8.

⁶ Ps. cxli. 3.

⁸ Ezek. viii. 12.

⁴ Jude 24.

⁷ Deut. viii. 2.

waywardness? Or, you may have been impatient because some one differed in opinion from you ; as if there were no possibility of *your* being mistaken, or of there being two points of view from which the same thing may be seen. Sick persons who live much alone are in *great* danger of falling into this snare. They frequently live in a world of their own, and have become so used to their own opinions, and views, and pictures of all things, that they forget that there can be any others, and are perhaps perplexed and worried by them. But this kind of isolation is very injurious to them, and they should be thankful to hear differences of opinion. Or, you may have let slip some impatient word or phrase, which, at the moment, may scarcely strike you as it may strike a bystander. "How long you are!" "I wish you would make haste;" "Do bring that quickly;" are dangerous phrases to use. Oftentimes they mean little or nothing. It is the tone of voice which generally betrays what they mean. Be thankful to any one who tells you that it is a bad habit, and must minister to impatience of heart. "Keep thy heart with all diligence ; for out of it are the issues of life."² A habit of repressing such words is the greatest possible help to overcome the evil thing.

² Prov. iv. 23.

IV


Considering Symptoms

ANOTHER temptation in weakness, and indeed in all illness, is constantly to be considering symptoms, thinking what will be the result of each one. Whether this or that is dangerous? what it is a symptom of?

Then if the sick person is eagerly desiring to die, the temptation is to consider whether it is the symptom of a mortal disease. How long it may last? whether it proves that you are much worse, or that death is near at hand?

Or if you lastly desire to recover your health, then it is scanned the other way. Is not this a good symptom? Does it not show how much better I am? Does it not prove that I am really recovering?

Nothing deceives and disappoints more than symptoms. We are poor judges of them, of what they lead to, or are proofs of. In one person a symptom may be very serious, which in another may be quite the reverse. It may prove a contrary thing in opposite states and constitutions. Therefore it is best to leave them to the physician to consider, and to turn away your minds from every temptation to consider the results and probabilities—to abstain from the common but injurious habit of feeling your pulse, and trying to make discoveries



ings ; and all others they count hardhearted. But is there no sin in discontent? Misery there surely is. Discontented spirits are ever "seeking rest but finding none."¹ In the society of others, they crave for attention and sympathy. When they are alone they turn inwardly upon themselves, wearied and disappointed—more hopeless than ever : they brood over their distresses, and never know the blessing of peace.

There is but one remedy for it all. That remedy lies within the reach of every sick person ; but they must apply it for themselves, and must earnestly cry to God to give them the strength and the courage, the patience and the perseverance, to apply it faithfully and unweariedly. The remedy is contentment ; but there are many ingredients in it.

1. To see and to believe that you are discontented.

2. To feel the greatness of the sin of discontent.

3. Not to allow yourself any excuses or palliations, *e.g.*, not to say, "Perhaps I am rather discontented sometimes, but then I have so much to make me so."

4. To hide nothing from yourself about it, but to say, "*I* am discontented."

5. To consider it a constant duty to fight against it ; beginning with some small thing and that which is the most obvious to yourself.

6. Remember that it is a *holy* war that you are beginning—one which you cannot fight alone, and

¹ Matt. xii. 43.

for which you must daily, and earnestly, ask the help of God.

7. Do not be out of heart if you make very slow progress, and find the difficulties rather increase than diminish. "The battle is not yours, but God's."²

Your friends have been far more patient with you than you have given them credit for. You have wearied their spirits very often; they have tried with earnest desire to please you, and to make you happy; and they could not. You have complained of them; and at length have, after many hard thoughts of them, become estranged from them in heart. No wonder you are unhappy; your state is a very painful one, and calls for true pity. But have you asked yourself whether there may not be something in you, which hinders you from receiving what you crave for? and which seems to shut up, and shut out, the love of friends, and leave you (as you suppose) a sad and isolated being? You think your lot a hard one: perhaps even unlike that of others. Who placed you in that lot? Is it not written that "the lot is cast into the lap; but the whole disposing thereof is of the Lord?"³ Did you ever think that every portion of your lot is under His control? if so, have you any right to reply against it?

Again. Are there no crosses of which you complain, that you have brought upon yourself? Do you never say, or make it appear, that you should

² 2 Chron. xx. 15.

³ Prov. xvi. 33.

like a thing to be done, or to have a thing, and then complain afterwards of that very thing, which you brought upon yourself, and say that it tired or annoyed you? If you can answer *No*, happy are you; but if your conscience must answer that it is true, then the result shows discontent, and unwillingness to be satisfied.

Again. Do you never go on complaining to every one you meet with, or whom you confide in, until your whole mind is full of your grievances, and you can think of nothing else, when you are alone; and even your very prayers are complainings—perhaps often rather of others than of yourself? Truly this is one of the surest indications of a discontented heart.

Do you never, when you are alone, think of all the aggravations of your lot; of all the things that might be otherwise; of the characters of your friends, and even of your nearest relations; until you take an entirely exaggerated view of every one, and of every circumstance; and afterwards really, though perhaps unintentionally, represent things to yourself, and to others, quite untruly—giving a false gloss and unreal colouring to the whole?

A faithful and sincere answer to these questions will teach you how truly to reply to the question,—Is there no *sin* in discontent? Are not the sins threefold:—1. Sin towards God. 2. Sin towards your neighbour. 3. Sin towards yourself?

1. Sin towards God.

He has placed you where you are. He has

chosen for you your friends, your home, your trials, your blessings, your pains, your pleasures, and everything that belongs to your lot. He has chosen them because they are the best for you—those which will the most surely and quickly perfect you, and liken you to Himself. He would change them in one moment, but thereby He would not prove His love.

2. Sin against your neighbour.

Your discontent has given you hard thoughts of him, as hindered you from love ; at least from anything but that kind of love, which selects a few to care for, who meet your wishes, and then rejects the rest. Read 1 Cor. xiii., and try yourself by it.

3. Sin against yourself.

You have, by discontent, shut yourself out from the enjoyment of all the blessings, and helps, and comforts, with which God has surrounded you ; you have hindered yourself from peace, and rest, and quietness, and have isolated yourself. If your sight had been cleansed, you would have seen bright and blessed things around you, things to be thankful for, and to rejoice in. If your ears had not been stopped, you would have heard loving voices, and they would have touched your heart, and made it to rejoice and sing. In all these things you have sinned against faith, hope, and charity. You have not trusted God, you have not "hoped all things, believed all things, endured all things,"⁴ or persevered in loving, though you fancied that no

⁴ 1 Cor. xiii. 7.

love was bestowed upon you. This would have been the "fulfilment of the law,"⁵ and would surely have brought you a blessing.

It is not too late to "begin to lead a new life." Do not say that it is impossible. The "God of hope" can give you hope to enter on your way. The "God of love" will lead you on, step by step, until you are "changed into the same image."⁶ Only be in earnest. Let your purpose be fixed and steadfast. Do not shrink at little things. First, ask God to show you the *sin*, what a *real* thing it is. You never can be in earnest until you have done this; ask not once only, but again and again; and do not leave off asking, even when you fancy that you are improving. Then, begin with some one thing; resolve, perhaps, that on one subject you will never complain; or if, as most likely will be the case, you forget your resolution; then truly confess it before God, and humbly ask His forgiveness. Next, either in this thing or some other, try to find some bright spot, something to be satisfied with, and even to be thankful for. Go on by degrees, as your spirit grows stronger, to add to the subjects on which you abstain from murmuring, and those for which you can be thankful.

Thus, by degrees, your heart, which was dark and drear, will become bright and happy. The discontented thoughts about your friends will change into wonder at their love and kindness, until your heart seems to expand and glow, and

⁵ Rom. xiii. 10.

⁶ 2 Cor. iii. 18.

your spirit to rejoice. All the world will change its aspect. You will wonder why the eyes of your mind were formerly so blind, and your heart so cold and loveless.

This is no ideal picture, but true to the letter. Only try whether it is genuine, try to make it your own. Then you, who now "go forth weeping, shall doubtless come again rejoicing, bringing your sheaves"⁷ with you.

"Godliness with contentment is great gain."⁸ It does not say merely "*godliness* is great gain." May not this account for the fact, that many so-called godly persons are so discontented? The Scriptures tell us, "having food and raiment therewith to be content."⁹ How have we obeyed this command? And again, another Scripture says, "Thou shalt not covet,"¹ and "Let your conversation be without covetousness."² Is not discontent with any portion of our lot nearly allied to "*covetousness*?" "*Covetousness, which is idolatry*;"³ it may be idolatry of self, or any other form of idolatry. "Seekest thou great things for thyself? seek them not."⁴ "Give us this day our daily bread."⁵

If in anything you are discontented with your lot; in that thing be sure you are finding fault with the will of God, and doubting of His love. If this be so, O how have we sinned! how do we daily sin! truly thus we have "grieved the Holy Spirit."⁶

⁷ Ps. cxxvi. 6.

¹ Exod. xx. 17.

⁴ Jer. xlv. 5.

⁸ 1 Tim. vi. 6.

² Heb. xiii. 5.

⁵ Matt. vi. 11.

⁹ 1 Tim. vi. 8.

³ Col. iii. 5.

⁶ Eph. iv. 30.

Let us seek earnestly for contentment. It is the best thing we can do, to show our gratitude to Him for His gifts—for “He has given us richly all things to *enjoy*.”⁷ Contentment is perfect rest and perfect peace; it asks for nothing; seeks for nothing; hopes for nothing; wishes nothing but what God gives. It ceases to look about and see how its condition can be bettered: knowing that what God wills, that must be perfection. Contentment does not ask to see the reason why God does this or that, or why He withholds things which look like blessings; with open hands it receives all His good gifts, and thanks Him for His love and care; it does not look onwards, knowing that God will provide; it has no wants, no cares, but to know Him more, and to love Him better. This state is the duty of all, and especially of those who are called by sickness to constant temptations to sins against contentment. God would not make any thing to be our duty, unless it were possible of attainment—unless it would be for our highest good—unless He would give us the strength to perform what He requires of us. Therefore let us never rest until we truly know what contentment means, and are seeking to learn to say,—“Lord, I am not high-minded; I have no proud looks; I do not exercise myself in great matters, which are too high for me. But I refrain my soul, and keep it low, like as a child that is weaned from his mother: yea, my soul is even as a weaned child. O Israel,

⁷ 1 Tim. vi. 17.

trust in the Lord, from this time forth for evermore."⁸ "For with the Lord there is mercy; and with Him there is plenteous redemption. And He shall redeem Israel from all his sins."⁹

II

Sympathy

SYMPATHY should especially be wrought out in us by sickness. No sick persons have truly understood the lesson that it was designed to teach them, until they have learned this truth. They may deeply feel their deficiencies, for "we are all by nature hard and unsympathizing." We are very slow to learn true sympathy. It is very easy to sympathize with some persons who suit our tastes; and which such trials as are exactly like our own. But this is but a form of self-love and selfishness. In sympathizing with them, we seem, as it were, to sympathize with ourselves; we never forget their relation to us; thoughts of self run through the whole. Sickness, wrongly received, increases selfishness to the highest degree. Sickness, rightly received, does, by degrees, cast out the "unclean spirit" whose name is "Legion."¹ Sympathy is not natural to us: it can only be given to us by our sympathizing High Priest; but as He

⁸ Ps. cxxx.⁹ Ps. cxxx. 7, 8.¹ Mark v. 9.

was "perfected through suffering,"² so He perfecteth us. Do not say, with sorrow of heart,— "Alas, I have no sympathy; my besetting sin has been to sympathize only with a few; from the many I have always had a temptation to turn away, which I have but too little resisted; there is something in that person's manner which I cannot draw towards—we seem to have few, if any, points in common." *Show* sympathy, if you would *receive* it; create the atmosphere, and you will inhale it also.

Sympathy is not a natural gift; though a few natures may be so endowed with it as to shadow forth the full reality, which can only be obtained by living with Him who is perfect sympathy, and deeply thinking of that well of life that flows from His pierced side. It is all in vain to seek for the gift in ourselves, it is not there. We must go out of ourselves for it; and the surest way to get it, is to feel that we are utterly without it; thus we are driven to ask it of Him who "giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not."³

The way to get increase of sympathy is to seek for increase of charity. "The essence of sympathy is charity." No one without true charity can have godly sympathy. He who was perfect love had perfect sympathy. The more we are conformed to the image of perfect love the more we really understand and seek to practise St. Paul's description of charity,⁴ the truer, and the more abiding, and the deeper will be our sympathy.

² Heb. ii. 10.

³ James i. 5.

⁴ 1 Cor. xiii.

But this is not a gift, which once obtained will never fail, or become less ; it is only by dwelling in the God of love and of sympathy, that we can shadow forth His love and His sympathy. It must be daily and hourly renewed, and flow into our hearts straight from Him.

If we are convinced that we do not understand the wants or the trials of another, we shall ask Him to interpret them to us, or else to give us the words to speak, making us merely the channels of His grace.

There is another sense in which it may be cultivated. We may constantly *exercise* ourselves in it, not refusing it to any one. We may resolve at all times to show interest in other people ; they may come and tell us things which seem to us mere trifles. We may be tempted to turn aside at once, or to say that they are trifles ; but bear in mind that nothing is a trifle which either tries any person or affects their welfare ; and also, that if we treat this thing lightly, they may be thrown back, and not expecting to receive sympathy for some greater thing, withhold that also from us, and so, from the want of that little act of self-denial of ours, we may have prevented ourselves from the delight and blessing of helping them, when we gladly would have done so. Sick people should give every one with whom they meet, cause to feel that in any trouble, great or small, they will always find ready sympathy and a kind reception ; never be turned away ; but meet with the greatest kindness, and consideration, and encouragement.

To do this requires continued self-denial both for the body and the mind. You may be particularly engaged ; but try to avoid showing that you have been interrupted, or that it is an inconvenience or annoyance to you. You may be trying to rest, but if a *real* demand for sympathy or help comes, do not refuse to meet it. You may be peculiarly worn out in body and in spirit, but "consider Him" who said, when He was weary and hungry, "My meat is to do the will of Him that sent me."⁵ Already you may have been feeling worn out, and are vainly seeking after that quietness and calmness of spirit which has been taken from you by the continued strain. You seem to have been attending to the claims of others all the day ; you have just lain down to rest, and rejoice in the comfort. Some new call comes. If it clearly is a *call*, do not shrink from it, but give ready, tender, and loving sympathy. You will be rewarded for your self-denial, if not now, at least another day, when all those acts which you may have long since forgotten will meet you again ; when every tear of true compassion that you have shed will be remembered by Him who has bid you "weep with them that weep ;"⁶ when every smile by which you have cheered another, every loving word, every sympathizing look, or even pressure of the hand, which touches a mourner's heart, will be remembered ; when joy will meet you for every time that you have "rejoiced with them that do rejoice,"⁶ or have

⁵ John iv. 34.⁶ Rom. xii. 15.

gladdened one heart, by your glowing or hearty participation in what has gladdened them.

O yes, it shall be so, because to show sympathy is to "walk in the blessed steps of Christ's most holy life!" The tears which He shed on earth are earnest and types of those which He sheds with us day by day. He would not have bidden us to "weep with them that weep," unless He had set us the example. We never weep, even in spirit, but He weeps with us. Be thankful, then, if He calls you thus to walk with Him. Oftentimes the effort will be very great. You feel that your room is made the focus where all the troubles of the house meet. Sometimes it is very wearying to you; you are tempted to wish it otherwise—to think, why should you have these additions to your burdens? Nay, rather rejoice that you are permitted to follow in His steps who never turned any away; who when He was on earth called His disciples to come "apart into a desert place and rest awhile; for there were many coming and going, and they had no leisure so much as to eat."⁷ And yet, when the people saw Him, and followed Him, instead of turning them away because He and His disciples wanted rest, "He was moved with compassion towards them, because they were as sheep having no shepherd, and He began to teach them many things." Nor did He merely teach them, but He fed them also; He cared for their bodies as well as their souls—"Go thou and do likewise."⁸

⁷ Mark vi. 31.

⁸ Luke x. 37.

Remember, too, that there is encouragement in the fact of your friends bringing their little troubles and vexations to you. It is *not* the mere fact of your being a fixed spot in the house, and always to be found, whoever is *not*, that causes them to do so ; they would not continue to bring them, if they found no sympathy from you, no understanding of their wants. Rejoice, then, to be made like unto your Lord and Master, for though you cannot go "about doing good," you can lie still, and let your friends come to you that you may do them good.

Do not fancy that you ought to show sympathy in all great trials and troubles, and in all spiritual things, but not in things temporal. Let your sympathy be universal. You may be asked to decide between two colours ; to choose some article of dress ; to look at some book which does not interest you ; the manner of your doing so may, for aught you know, affect the whole life of the person who asks you this thing. They may be struck with the readiness of your sympathy in a trifle which could not really interest you ; it may draw them to you, make them feel, when hereafter some heavy sorrow arises, that you, at least, *could* sympathize with them ; thus they may turn to you, and then you may be permitted to have a real deep object of sympathy with them. Try also to cultivate a sympathizing manner ; let there be sympathy in your voice, your tone, your manner ; let nothing contradict your words ; kind words may be said often without it, but they fail to go to the heart. But a

word said with real tenderness and feeling may heal and soothe to a degree that we can never estimate in this life. This kind of discipline is a wonderful cure for that exactingness of spirit by which so many, and especially sick persons, are injured and distressed, but find it hard to overcome in themselves. Never exact sympathy from others. "Give full measure, pressed down,"⁹ and you will surely "receive it again into your own bosom," in far greater measure than you ever gave it; if not from those to whom you gave it; if not even from any friends on earth; yet He who has said, "Inasmuch as ye did it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye did it unto Me,"¹ will give you a deeper and deeper knowledge and realization of His own sympathy, which "passeth knowledge."

III

Patience

A SICK person does indeed need to have patience, and that of many kinds. Patience in bearing pain. Patience in bearing all the privations of sickness, and all its many and accumulated trials. Patience to bear with those around him, their "sins, negligences, and ignorances," their misunderstandings, and obtuseness. Patience to bear with the circumstances of life, and his own

⁹ Luke vi. 38.

¹ Matt. xxv. 45.

peculiar lot. Patience to wait the "appointed time until his change come."²

It is indeed true, "ye have need of patience."³ The need seems to grow sorer and sorer as time goes on. At times the difficulty of being patient may seem greatly lessened; but then, again, it will soon become as difficult as ever. At times, all the causes for impatience seem to gather strength. The nerves seem wholly unstrung. Everything tells on the sufferer. He sees cause for impatience where he never did before; he feels utterly without patience, and as if the words applied to him, "Woe to him that hath lost patience."⁴ Sometimes this loss of patience is very sudden; you may seem even to yourself quite patient and quiet, when suddenly a fierce temptation to impatience may come, and take you quite unprepared. The impulse is momentary, but the suffering involved in overcoming it, and the sorrow of heart that you have been betrayed into sin, will long abide with you, and take from you your confidence. You feel as if it were a hopeless thing to expect ever to become *habitually* patient, *resting* in patience.

Perhaps in this case, as with sympathy, we are apt to look on patience as a natural gift, a thing belonging to some characters, whilst others are wholly without it. We speak of one and another having a patient disposition. Some certainly have more natural patience than others; but it is nothing that will stand them in time of need, or of sore con-

² Job xiv. 14.

³ Heb. x. 36.

⁴ Eccclus. ii. 14.

flict. Then it will be found that "the bed is shorter than a man can stretch himself on it: the covering is narrower than he can wrap himself in it."⁵ It will stand no such test. In a short illness, the calls for patience are comparatively few; it is when the weary days pass on, one after another, bringing their own petty trials, all unseen by the bystanders, that its full need is felt. Then they who have been accounted or who have counted themselves patient, feel what a false name they have had, what a false thing they have been living on; all the gloss is gone, they see themselves "naked, and miserable, and poor, and blind."⁶ Time was, when you may have wondered why the Church prayed for all sufferers, that "they may have *patience* under their sufferings." You may have thought that *comfort* was the better and the more necessary thing to ask for them. Now, you feel what wonderful knowledge of your need has been shown in that prayer. It is not *comfort* that you crave for now, though very thankful to receive it, when your Father sees fit to give it; but patience you must have, or you cannot go on your weary way for an hour. O! how you sometimes feel smitten and ashamed when some friend speaks of your patience: your patience!—you who feel a continual conflict with impatience; whose life is one struggle with it; who seem to yourself failing ever; whose tears and remorse could often witness how little you think that you have patience; who groan

⁵ Isa. xxviii. 20.⁶ Rev. iii. 17.

before "the God of patience,"⁷ beseeching Him to make you like-minded with Himself. At times you almost think that they are mocking you, and are inclined to be angry. But there is encouragement in the words, for deeply as you may have been conscious of the inward conflict, you have reason to believe, if they are truthful and sincere friends, that your struggle has, by the grace of God, been hidden from all eyes but His, and that you have not been permitted to let it break out into deed or word; and so you may "thank God and take courage."⁸

It happens the more frequently that the *long* discipline of sickness and suffering is given to impetuous, and impatient, or over-active spirits. To them, of course, their natural impatience must be as constant fuel to the fire which ever burns within them, and their discipline will be a very sore one to themselves. Yet fear not, if thus it is with you, "greater is He that is for you, than all they that are against you," the battle is not yours, but God's;⁹ and you "shall be more than conquerors through Him that hath loved us."¹ "Tribulation worketh patience."² A quiet, calm frame of mind, ever staying itself on God, is the groundwork of patience; in "quietness and confidence shall be your strength;"³ which also is expressed by the words "in patience possess ye your souls."⁴ Stillness works patience;

⁷ Rom. xv. 5.

¹ Rom. viii. 37.

⁸ Acts xxviii. 15.

² Rom. v. 3.

⁴ Luke xxi. 19.

⁹ 2 Chron. xx. 15.

³ Isa. xxx. 15.

we must first get into the posture before we can stay in it. What is patience but remaining in the posture of stillness? You will say, "How difficult this is!" Ah yes, it is indeed; may we not rather say that it is impossible? It would be so, if it were not that the God of Patience is our refuge, and therefore we need "not fear in the days of evil."⁵

We have no patience; but let us settle that in our minds: and then we shall feel that we must seek somewhere the thing which we so absolutely need. We have not far to go, for "He is not far from every one of us,"⁶ who is "the God of patience." We need not ask Him to give it to us, for even his own best gifts would soon perish in our keeping. Besides, we should soon grow vain of it, if we thought that the patience was our own, and the offspring of our own hearts. Let us rather ask Him to unite us more and more to Himself: to enable us so to dwell in Him, that we shall live in Him, walk in Him, act in Him. So to dwell in Him, that we shall never do anything alone. So to dwell in Him, that we shall always feel His strength supporting and upholding us,—that we are in His arms, and may rest there with all our weight. So to dwell in Him, that we shall always ask Him to be with us, and in us, when we speak; and never to suffer us to be so hurried in ourselves, that we shall not feel leisure and quietness to turn to Him. There is no other cure for impatience: but there are helps to the cure.

⁵ Ps. xlix.

⁶ Acts xvii. 27.

1. When you feel impatient, if it be possible do not speak ; for if you do, the words which you say will give you great sorrow and conflict afterwards.

2. If it be necessary to speak, commend yourself first to God : " O God, make speed to save us ;" or, " O Lord, make hast to help us ;" " Lord, save me ;" " Lord, help me." Any words will do, only let them be an act of commending yourself to God ; and then be strong and fear not, speak what is necessary.

3. Do not torment yourself about it, and be constantly fancying that you are impatient ; it will but make you more so ; and do not accuse yourself of the sin in an exaggerating manner.

4. When you have shown impatience to any one, whether to a friend or a servant, acknowledge it, and distinctly say that you know you did it, that you were wrong, and are sorry for it ; say it briefly, and do not try to excuse yourself. It is a most useful habit, and a real humiliation if practised aright, especially when the person is a nurse or a servant. It is the only restitution that you can make to them ; and the example will be a blessing to them, and will show them also what your feeling of the sin is, and that you do not sin recklessly, or without true repentance.

5. Observe what things cost you the most impatience. If *possible* avoid those things ; but if not, if they come in our daily lot, then specially watch those weak points, and be on your guard at all times against them. If any person particularly

excites it, be especially on the watch when they are with you ; if you know that they are coming, ask God to be with you, and to strengthen your heart ; if not, then look up to Him at the time for help.

6. Do not expect to be exempt from it ; you cannot be, whilst you are weak. "No strange thing hath happened to you but that which is common to men ;" and God will "make a way for your escape, that you may be able to bear it."⁷

7. Remember that though sickness is an especial opportunity for the exercise of patience it is that state in which all the deepest impatience of your nature is stirred up, and is often greatly aggravated by medicine.

After all, the great remedy is to "consider Him who endured contradiction of sinners against Himself, lest you be wearied and faint in your mind ; for ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin."⁸ "Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh out for us a far more exceeding, even an eternal weight of glory."⁹

What more do we need ? what more would we ask ? *Now* these trials scarcely seem "light afflictions," but they only do not seem so, because we look at them *alone*, at "the things which are seen and temporal."¹ Let us but look more constantly at those "things which are unseen and eternal," and these present things will change their aspect. Let us bear patiently even the great trial of our

⁷ 1 Cor. x. 13.

⁹ 2 Cor. iv. 17.

⁸ Heb. xii. 3, 4.

¹ 2 Cor. iv. 18.

own impatience, if it does but so reveal sin to us, that we shall be enabled in the strength of God to overcome it ; if it does but make us to hang upon Him, and learn that "without Him we can do nothing."² "A little while," and the temptations and provocations to impatience will all be ended. Let us bear them now, whilst God lays these crosses upon us. Let Him take His own way of humbling us, which is sometimes to permit us to sin before, and against others, that we may learn how weak we are, and that there is no safety for us but dwelling in the "God of patience." Thus shall we be "strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power, unto all patience and long-suffering with joyfulness."³ Let us pray Him to enable us to show "a quiet and composed patience, without tumult of troubled thoughts and discontented passions ; a submissive and resigned patience, without reluctance, to His will, or rebellious murmurings : a patience of hope that does not sink under our burdens, nor is driven by the smart of pains to mistrust His love, or care, or gracious promises : and a thankful patience, that continues sensible of our comforts and supports, as well as of our sicknesses ; and that owns all present sufferings to be far below our deserts, and all past and present mercies to be infinitely above them. And make us perfect, O our Father ! in this patience. Let us tarry thy leisure, and not be hasty. Let us wait on Thee, and not grow weary ; but bear all in comfortable

² John xv. 5.³ Col. i. 11.

hopes of Thy strength to support our present weakness ; and of Thy mercy to ease and deliver us at last, either by a more healthful life, or by a happy death, through the mediation of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen."

IV

Submission

THEY who have truly learned patience, have been learning submission at the same time. But there is a difference between patience and submission. Patience is lying in a still posture before God, waiting His commands and His time ; patience is the refraining from all efforts, and vehemence, and eagerness—everything that would go between, or outrun, the leadings of God.

But submission is the actual surrender of ourselves, our bodies, souls and spirits, our wills, into the hands of God ; the giving up all ; the practical saying of the heart and actions, that He knows better than we do ; that He chooses better for us ; that we yield all to Him, and are pleased with what pleases Him. Submission is of very slow growth ; it wholly opposes and resists nature. We have strong wills of our own, and they strive fiercely with the will of God. Even our very prayers are the expressions of our self-will ; if we do not dare to say the words, yet do they not often mean *my*

will be done? O how vehemently we pray that this or that thing may be given to us, which if it were granted, would make us miserable for the rest of our lives! You have asked for some special gift, and instead of its being given, you have had the very opposite. You have asked for work—active work for the glory of God; and the answer to your prayer has been this life-long sickness. You have asked for patience; and a sickness has been sent, which peculiarly brings out your impatience. Everything that you have asked seems answered by contraries. You have been almost tempted to cease from making any requests, for none, it seems to you, are granted. You say, that if you had asked for bright things and worldly gifts, you could have understood it; but for these things your heart did not crave. And then what chafing of spirit follows! Everything frets you; you cannot understand it; you were not always so rebellious, you think; you did not always dislike the ways of God; you thought that you had truly given up yourself to Him. You were not mistaken. It is just *because* you had given yourself up to Him, that He answers you thus; for He has taken you to be His own, and He will have you, wholly, entirely, without any reservations, “for richer for poorer; for better for worse.” You have offered yourself to Him, and now you must accept His terms. He will have no rival, for “He is a jealous God.”⁴ He says, “My son, give me thy heart:”⁵ and if you

⁴ Exod. xx. 5.⁵ Prov. xxiii. 26.

do give it, He will have the whole, undivided heart. "The idols He will utterly abolish."⁶ He will "cast them to the moles and the bats." Do not wonder, then, to see them cast out: do not wonder if He "takes a scourge of small cords, and drives them out,"⁷ that your heart may be a fit dwelling-place for Himself; a "temple of the Holy Ghost;"⁸ the "habitation of God through the Spirit."⁹ It will need great purging and refining, and the process will be very long. Yet this it must be, if you would attain to true submission. At first, it is all struggle—one unceasing fight; a perpetual sense of strife—of having your will at variance with His; then, by degrees, it becomes less and less so. Again, your own will is seeming to gain the mastery; a fiercer struggle follows. "Alas!" you say, "will it ever be thus?" No, surely it will not. You may wrestle till all your powers are out of joint, and your sinews are shrinking. Go on; wrestle till break of day; the morning will dawn soon; He who fights in you will prevail. In the utmost sense of your weakness, you will resign yourself to Him; and from henceforth there will be more of His will in you than of your own—at least, you will love it better, and grow in love to it day by day, until at last you will shrink from all choices, feeling that He knows what is best for you, and that you know nothing. Then you will find, that in yielding to His will, there is always rest, and, sooner or

⁶ Isa. ii. 18. 20.

⁸ Cor. vi. 19.

⁷ John ii. 15.

⁹ Eph. ii. 22.

between God and your soul. Or rather, "He is working all His works in" you, for you are lying still, scarcely conscious of anything but of extreme exhaustion, and all its attendant suffering. But He is bowing your will, He is teaching you how to yield yourself up to Him; He is teaching you the utmost of your weakness, that you may learn what is meant by "everlasting strength."⁵ He is giving you the very trying discipline of nothingness, that you may learn what you really are in His sight. He Himself is crushing you, therefore fear not; for "He will not break the bruised reed, He will not quench the smoking flax."⁶ He will not lay His hand upon you more heavily than is necessary in healing all the wounds of your soul.

The greatest help to submission is to receive everything straight from God. Do not look at second causes, never suffer yourself to do that; do not look back to the beginning of your illness, and think how it first came on; how it might, perhaps, have been avoided; how it might have been removed in its early stage; how circumstances have aggravated it; and do so still. You have nothing to do with these things. God sent you your illness at first. God permitted the oversight of your friends, if you perceive any. God placed you where you now are, and exactly in the very circumstances that you find yourself. Whatever you find fault with, you are but "replying against God, and finding fault with His will."⁷ Bear this always in mind;

⁵ Isa. xxvi. 3.

⁶ Matt. xii. 20.

⁷ Rom. ix. 20.

never let it slip. When you are tempted afresh to murmur at some little circumstance, say, Who appointed this? Could not God have prevented this if He had not seen that it was necessary for you? Then answer, God sent it; it is the will of God. Do not say, All this is very true in great things, but how can it be true in little things? and they are the hardest to meet with submission. Can anything which concerns you be a little thing? Can anything which stirs up evil in you, or tempts you, be a little thing? If "the very hairs of your head are all numbered,"⁸ is there anything too small for your Father to notice! No, be assured that He well knows how hard the *little* things are to bear, and it is therefore that He permits them, for the "trying of your faith, which is more precious than gold, though it be tried in the fire."⁹ Each of these little circumstances, borne meekly and patiently, will conform you to the likeness of your Lord and Master. His whole life on earth was one continued crushing of the will: and shall we desire that it should be otherwise with us? "He Himself went not up to joy, but first He suffered pain; He entered not into His glory before He was crucified; so truly our way to eternal joy is to suffer here with Christ; and our door to enter into eternal life is gladly to die with Christ; that we may rise again from death, and dwell with Him in life everlasting."¹

Cease then from all struggle, and let Him fight

⁸ Luke xii. 7.

⁹ 1 Pet. i. 7.

¹ Service for the Visitation of the Sick.

for you. Lie still in Him. Do not tease yourself with acts; perfect stillness, rest in all His ways, because they are the ways of the God of Love: asking no questions: believing that "what thou knowest not now, thou shalt know hereafter;"² not saying, "Lord, why cannot I follow Thee now?"³ but giving yourself up to Him to lead you, and to guide you, and to carry you whither He will: this is submission.

V

Hope

ONE of the most needful graces for a sick person to cultivate is Hope. "No chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous:"⁴ the bright and joyful things are all before him,—the dark and dreary things surround him. He looks around and asks—where is the bright blessing of health? The mournful answer arises, "It is gone for ever." No, it is *not* gone for ever; it is awaiting you there, where there shall be no more pain: where you shall "put on a glorious body, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing;"⁵ but you must "with patience wait for it; you must hope for it."⁶ Yet a little and "He shall change your vile body, and fashion it like unto His glorious body." This

² John xiii. 2.³ John xiii. 37.⁴ Heb. xii. 11.⁵ Eph. v. 27.⁶ Rom. viii. 25.

blessing is not come, it is yet future; you must hope for it. "Hope which is seen is not hope; for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for?"⁷

To some persons, perhaps, hope is natural; they hope for everything; they always look to the bright side, and expect the happiest and best result. This temperament is probably given but to few; and even they to whom it is given, if they endure long years of sickness, find hope become less and less natural to them; it seems to eat the life away, and make all things joyless and flat. And yet none need hope so much as the sick. It is a dreary thing not to hope. Job describes a weary and sorrowful state, when he says, "My days are spent without hope;"⁸ and the prophets Isaiah and Jeremiah speak of there being "no hope,"⁹ as a state of mere dreariness. And again, St. Paul speaks of "having no hope,"¹ as of those who have nothing left to them.

True it is that hope "deferred maketh the heart sick;"² and some have thought that it is better not to hope, than to have the chance of that hope being deferred; they have fancied that thus they should be spared from trial. But does not this mean the continual aiming after some earthly thing, and the not attaining it when and as we will, and so growing sick at heart, and weary of delay? If hope is a heavenly grace, one given by God Himself, must it not be a good and precious gift, one that

⁷ Rom. viii. 24.

⁸ Job vii. 6.

⁹ Isa. lvii. 10; Jer. ii. 25.

¹ Eph. ii. 12.

² Prov. xiii. 12.

we are to seek ~~for~~ by earnest and unwearied prayer? We should remember, too, ~~that~~ that it is as possible to sin against hope, as to sin against charity; in order, therefore, that we may not commit this sin, we must earnestly and continually cultivate hope.

Sick persons, shut out for the remainder of this present life from the bright things of this world; too ill to enjoy life; surely are not called upon to hope for recovery; nor to hope for brighter days here upon earth. No such lesson is proposed to them, but rather to learn to say, "Thy will be done." Yet they will find it a blessed and a purifying exercise, to try to hope, and to exercise themselves constantly in it. They seem to themselves now to be in prison, shut up from all the joys of life. But they are "prisoners of hope;"³ for "hope which is seen is not hope; for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for?"⁴ It is future blessing that they look for, and therefore hope calls for *patience*, and St. Paul speaks of the "patience of hope;"⁵ and "that we through *patience* might have hope;"⁶ and "*Patience* worketh experience, and experience hope."⁷ "It is good that a man should both hope, and quietly wait for the salvation of the Lord."⁸

And surely since "hope purifieth,"⁹ it must be a blessed grace. Again, "we are saved by hope;"¹ we are not to suffer ourselves to lie in the grave of hopelessness, but to look forward to the "joy that

³ Zech. ix. 12.

⁴ Rom. viii. 24.

⁵ 1 Thess. i. 3.

⁶ Rom. xv. 4.

⁷ Rom. v. 4.

⁸ Lam. iii. 26.

⁹ 1 John iii. 3.

1 Rom. viii. 24.

is set before us."² "Hope maketh ~~not~~ ^{not} ashamed."³ Earthly hope will often disappoint us, but heavenly hope, hope in things that are future, will never "make us ashamed." Hope can put gladness into our heart, for we are told of "the rejoicing of hope;"⁴ and "a lively hope,"⁵—a living bright reality. It is not to be an empty thing, but the "full assurance of hope;"⁶ the living certainty that those bright blessings are before us; a "reaching forth unto the things that are before."⁷ It is an "anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast; entering into that which is within the veil."⁸ It ensures all things to us; makes them into realities; and thus, as we realize these truths, we are enabled to "abound in hope."⁹ That which we are to hope for is "the hope which is laid up for us in heaven," and hope brings heaven near; makes it no longer seem a future thing, but that into which "we which have believed do enter"¹ now; feebly and faintly indeed, but yet "in heart and mind we ascend." Hope makes all things become realities, even as though they were already given to us; we possess them *now*; they are ours "if we are Christ's, and Christ is God's."² "He that plougheth, should plough in hope; and he that thresheth in hope should be partaker of his hope."³ Thus may we, though the seed may very long be hid in the ground, still let us hope; we plough in hope now; this too

² Heb. xii. 2.³ 1 Pet. i. 3.⁴ Heb. vi. 19.⁵ 1 Cor. iii. 23.⁶ Rom. v. 5.⁷ Heb. vi. 11.⁸ Rom. xv. 13.⁹ Heb. iii. 6.¹ Phil. iii. 13.² Heb. iv. 3.³ 1 Cor. ix. 10.

is the ploughing time—the sowing time—the harrowing time; but the harvest will surely come. “Hope to the end,”⁴ and “though it tarry, wait for it.”⁵

But we must not merely hope for future blessings, but *now* “hope in God.”⁶ Our souls may be very faint, yet let us be able to say heartily, “My soul fainteth for thy salvation, but I hope in thy word.”⁷ “I will hope continually, and will yet praise Thee more and more.”⁸

All earthly things may seem to be fading away; you see no brightness anywhere. Your own lot is full of sadness; you have sore trials in your family; you look into the world, and it seems full of sorrow. Where is hope then? Do not say “it is excluded.” “Hope thou in God.” “God is Light, and in Him is no darkness at all.”⁹ He only abideth—the world is all fleeting, passing away even whilst you gaze at it. Hope is not there; but “the hope of the righteous shall be gladness,”¹ because the Lord is their hope. “Happy is he whose hope is in the Lord his God.”² “The Lord will be the hope of His people.”³

If earthly things are failing you, “sorrow not even as others which have no hope.”⁴ If friends are taken from you, believe that if your friendship was in God, you will surely meet them in His presence, and have but “sent on your treasures,”

⁴ 1 Pet. i. 13. ⁵ Heb. x. 37. ⁶ Ps. xlii. 5. ⁷ Ps. cxix. 81.

⁸ Ps. lxxi. 14.

⁹ 1 John i. 5.

¹ Prov. x. 28.

² Ps. cxlvi. 5.

³ Joel iii. 16.

⁴ 1 Thess. iv. 13.

that they might be kept safely for you, and that you might be drawn in spirit to the world unseen. A little while, and you will find that your hope was no delusive thing—that it was a reality; that the “hope which is laid up for you in Heaven,”⁵ is kept by “the God of Hope.” Ask Him to give you hope day by day, “that you may abound in hope,”⁶ and thus glorify Him even as Abraham, who “hoped against hope”⁷—everything seemed against him; and yet because God had promised, therefore he hoped still; and so steadfast was his hope, that at the command of God he was ready to sacrifice his hope—his only son. So must we learn to give up all our best earthly hopes, to sacrifice them, if God calls us to do so; knowing that we have “hope laid up for us in Heaven.” And even whilst we are here on earth, let us hope in God, saying, “for I will yet praise Him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God.”⁸

“Now the God of Hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in Hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost.”⁹

⁵ Col. i. 5.

⁶ Rom. xv. 13.

⁷ Rom. iv. 18.

⁸ Ps. xlii. 11.

⁹ Rom. xv. 13.

VI

Cheerfulness

YOU cannot have true cheerfulness whilst you are fiercely struggling ; not until your heart is at rest, and you have leisure to forget yourself. If you have a murmuring spirit you cannot have true cheerfulness ; it will generally show itself in your countenance and your voice. Some little fretfulness or restlessness of tone will betray it. Your cheerfulness is forced, it does not spring up freely and healthily out of your heart, which it can only do when that is truly at rest in God ; when you are satisfied with His ways, and wishing no change in them. When this is truly your case, then your heart and mind are free, and you can rejoice in spirit.

When you have ceased to be occupied with yourself, you will have leisure to consider others, and to make them happy. You will seek and desire to be felt as a bright presence, cheering, and healing, and strengthening those around you, especially the members of your own family ; you will seek ever to greet them all brightly and cheerfully, and courteously, when they come into your room ; even if you feel very weary and languid, you will rouse yourself to say some kind word, or to give a smile of kindness ; you will try to overcome that nervous feeling which so often makes you shrink from look-

ing at people—which makes you fancy that you should cry or laugh if you did, and that the fixing your eyes anywhere was almost impossible. You will earnestly endeavour to make your greetings kind to *all*, not to a chosen few; to make *all* feel that they are welcome, even if their coming be an unwelcome interruption, and seemingly to you a most unfortunate one. Take it as a trial, from which you may receive real blessing, if you will receive it cheerfully, patiently, and submissively, without questionings; at any rate do not *show* that it is inconvenient, or that you wish them away; if you do, you will lose the personal blessing that you might have received; the relative one that you might have imparted. There are times, of course, with every sick person, when they are really unable to admit their friends—even the members of the family; but when this is truly the case, it may be explained very kindly, and be made apparent that “the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.”¹ Do not meet them with dulness, coldness, or unconcern: for the time give yourself up to them; make their interests your interests; encourage them to speak of themselves and their affairs, and do not lay your burdens upon them. The more you learn to bear the burdens of other people, the lighter your own become.

You will say, perhaps, that this is a severe lesson. How can you, who have been lying alone for so long, pondering your many trials, and difficulties,

¹ Matt. xxvi. 41.

and privations,—or else, have for hours been making strained efforts for others, which have worn your body and your spirit—how can you, in a moment, lay aside all these things, and meet other persons brightly and cheerfully, as if there were no pressure upon your own spirit? To say that the effort is *indeed* a great one, would not be enough; for it will not be attained by one, or even by a few desultory efforts, but by continued, persevering efforts, all made in, and with, God. You will have insurmountable difficulties; you will not succeed in your desires; you will often be met with a cold absent manner, when you have made the greatest effort to meet your friends warmly and kindly; chills will come over your own heart also, and be very painful and overpowering. Yet be not out of heart; persevere, and He whom you serve will crown your efforts ultimately with success, and will make the effort to become less and less. Remember that it is written, and “he that sheweth mercy, with cheerfulness.”² All the pleasure of receiving mercy, or sympathy, or kindness, is taken away, when it is offered cheerlessly and heartlessly, wearily or languidly.

Perhaps by nature you have no cheerfulness in your constitution; you never cultivated it; you thought it was a natural gift, and that those who had it not were not responsible for the lack of it. You have learned to view it otherwise *now*, and to feel that it is a high Christian duty—one very difficult

² Rom. xii. 8.

of attainment, and therefore needing constant exercise. At first you were hopeless; you said that *you* could never be cheerful; that you had naturally depressed spirits, and that illness had added to the depression; that it was unreasonable to expect it of you; that people ought to bring cheerfulness to you, and not to expect that you should show it forth to them; that you had such a constant drain on your spirits, that you needed that your friends should come and renew them for you—bring subjects of interest to you, and amuse your mind. You tried this plan, and found it to fail wholly, for it was always an uncertainty, and no sure ground of comfort: besides, you were fitful, and would not always be pleased and amused: they said and did the wrong thing, and at a wrong *time*, until you made it a trial to your friends to come to you. You saw that there must be something wrong: the secret was revealed to you; you were depending wholly on creatures, trusting to them to cheer you, and not living independently of all earthly persons and circumstances—living in God alone. At first the discovery was a severe trial to you, void of all hope; but by degrees you turned to “the God of consolation,”³ and asked Him to enable you to let “others take knowledge of you that you had been with Jesus.”⁴ Nor was this all; you learned to rest in Him; to be content; not to murmur; and thus you were so freed from thoughts of self, as to be able to give your thoughts to others, to a degree

³ Rom. xv. 5.⁴ Acts iv. 13.

which at first seemed to you impossible. Oh ! how many rewards you have already received, imperfectly as you have as yet learned, or can practise, the lesson. Even your health is the better for it ; your mind has ceased to prey upon itself, and to react on your body ; thus you give every advantage to remedies, and the best hope of your recovery. You have hours and days of gladness, where you used to have sorrow and sighing. You find life a pleasanter thing than you ever fancied it could become. You have the joy of feeling that you impart happiness to others—that you do not cast shadows on them. You have innumerable interests to occupy you, and to prevent your time from hanging wearily on your hands ; and you have a foretaste of that bright world to which we are hasting—where there will “be no more sorrow or sighing, or any such thing, for the former things will have passed away.”⁵ By cultivating this spirit, you will learn by degrees so completely to “rejoice with them that do rejoice,”⁶ that their pleasures will become your own, and you will have a true share in them.

Try often to plan pleasures for others, to consider their tastes ; and then simply, and without effort, to propose what you think will meet them. In doing so you may often have to deny yourself ; to make some arrangement that will put out your usual habits, or be an inconvenience to you. This will be very good for you, a wholesome discipline ; but do not let it be “seen of men,” it would spoil

⁵ Rev. xxi. 4.

⁶ Rom. xii. 15.

their pleasure ; and would surely rob you of part of the blessing. Show really hearty unconstrained pleasure in everything which gladdens another heart. It may indeed seem to cast long shadows on you, to speak to you of your captivity ; to remind you of the days when you could have joined in these things, and enjoyed them even as they. But do not let these dark thoughts darken your countenance ; offer them to God alone ; and ask Him to give you grace with your whole heart to say, "Thy will be done." There is sometimes a sort of turning away, an averted look, an audible sigh, when others are going forth and you cannot go ; this is not cheerfulness, and must not be suffered in yourself ; these things must be crucified. Let your heart go along with your friends ; enjoy with them ; and when they return, willingly and cheerfully hear all that they will tell you : if they have been where you never were—if they have seen persons whom, though you wish to see them, you have been prevented from seeing ;—do not shrink from owning it, or turn off the subject, but hear all with true interest, and you will feel as if you had been with them. In the joy of giving pleasure, you will receive a large measure yourself. Seek to cultivate the *habit* of enjoyment ; it is wonderful how it grows and strengthens in us. A flower may be brought to us, we may just carelessly receive it, and perhaps put it in water—or we may look at it, smell it, have it by us and enjoy it, and find much instruction in it. We may be cheered too by the

kindness which brought it ; and so it is with every thing else.

You know not what blessed influence you may by cheerfulness have on persons who come to see you. They may be strong and healthy now, but sickness may soon overtake them ; the remembrance of your cheerful sick-room may prevent them from dreading it, as they would have done, if their impressions of a sick-room had been only those of gloom and sadness. They may be tempted to much murmuring and discontent ; the remembrance of your cheerful face may be a reproof to them ; or it may lead them to think what it could be that made you cheerful amidst so many causes of trial ; and they may never give up their search until they have found that "with Him is the well of life."⁷

Children, too, may retain a sad or a bright impression all through their lives. Therefore, as "no man liveth unto himself, and no man dieth unto himself,"⁸ let us seek so to live, that our lives may be a blessing to others, and that eternally. Remember always, that it is not natural to you, and that you are bound to seek for it, and to give yourself no rest until you are vigorously cultivating this great Christian duty, and that God alone can teach you how "cheerfully to accomplish those things which He would have done."

Strive earnestly to "lay aside every weight,"⁹ every hindrance to the great duty of cheerfulness. '

⁷ Ps. xxxvi. 9.

⁸ Rom. xiv. 7.

⁹ Heb. xii. 1.

Perhaps one of the greatest, is the not living in the present : either suffering your mind to dwell on years that are past ; pleasures past away ; hopes all blighted ; purposes unfulfilled, stopped by sickness, employments hindered, work taken from you, your whole self changed and shattered. Or else, perhaps, living in the future, forming to yourself some dreamy imaginations of what you will do when you recover your health ; how it will be with you, how you can renew all past enjoyments, and give them a brighter glow than they ever had before. All this cannot fail to make you discontented with the present, and will make your lot seem to you sadder. You can never be cheerful until you feel that every one of the circumstances in which you now find yourself, you were placed in by the God of love—that it is your *calling*, and that you are to abide in it so long as He pleases. That is to say, you are to seek to be “settled and grounded”¹ in it, not seeking for, or desiring any change.

VII

Thanksgiving

THEY who are earnestly seeking to show forth cheerfulness, will have been already prepared to join in the thanksgiving.

The other duties of the sick—Contentment,

¹ Col. i. 23.

Sympathy, Patience, and Cheerfulness,—may be said to be “our duty towards our neighbour,” though each one has also in it much of our “duty towards God.” But Submission and Thanksgiving are, especially, our “duty towards God.” To “give thanks to Him for all things,”² is, indeed, a very difficult duty; for it includes giving thanks for trials of all kinds; for suffering and pain; for languor and weariness; for the crossing of our wills; for contradiction; for reproaches; for loneliness; for privations. Oh! this is a hard duty—most slow to be learned. Yet they who have learned submission will not find it a hard duty; for they will so entirely love all that God wills and appoints, that they will see it is the very best thing for them—which they could not have spared; and this will be ground for thanksgiving. Hereafter they will see that He gave them just what they would have chosen for themselves. Then, in looking back, they will see all the links of the chain, and how wonderfully even those have fitted, which at the time seemed to have no adaptation and agreement. This belief enables them to praise Him, and give thanks *now* for each thing, assured that as it has been, so it will be—that the God of love will do all things well. Therefore, as He does each thing, they will see some cause for thanksgiving; and though now the notes of praise are very feeble, they will swell more and more, until, “with all the company of Heaven, we laud and magnify His glorious name.”

² Eph. 5. 20.

Do not distress yourself because praise seems to you so difficult a duty : it is foreign to your nature, but it will grow easier, and more delightful to you, in proportion as you practise it. Begin with thanking Him for some little thing, and then go on, day by day, adding to your subjects of praise ; thus you will find their numbers grow wonderfully ; and in the same proportion, will your subjects of murmuring and complaining diminish, until you see in everything some cause for thanksgiving. If you cannot begin with anything positive, begin with something negative. If your whole lot seems only filled with causes for discontent, at any rate there is some trial that has *not* been appointed you ; and you may thank God for its being withheld from you. It is certain, that the more you try to praise, the more you will see how your path and your lying down are beset with mercies, and that the God of love is ever watching to do you good. And so likewise, as the sense of your unworthiness deepens, you will find more and more reason for thanksgiving. Such mercies given to me, and I so unworthy of them ! God is ever showing His love to me, and yet how little I thank and praise Him for His love ! He is ever giving me good gifts, and I am receiving them as a right, as if I had a claim to them ! Oh ! how little I have praised Him hitherto ! He has been giving me blessings ever since I was born, and I have scarcely noticed them : I have often taken them as matters of course ; and, alas ! still more frequently, have repined even at His very gifts, and

murmured at His loving will; and yet He has not been wearied with me, or ceased His gifts because I was unthankful.

The first sense of this deep unthankfulness is most humbling and abasing. But we must be made conscious of our sins before we shall be able to say, "I will praise Thee, for Thine anger is turned away, and Thou comfortedst me."³ We may see our comforts depart, as the bright things of life pass away; but when we have learned that the will of God is pure and perfect love, without change or variation, and that *all* His ways are loving to us, then we shall learn to say, "Although the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall no be herd in the stalls: yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation."⁴

There must be faith, hope, and charity in true thanksgiving. We must *believe* God—believe that He is love; and that all His ways towards us are "very faithfulness." We must *hope* in God, for "hope purifieth;"⁵ raises us above the earth; brings all future things near, and makes us to see future things as realities even now belonging unto us. There must be *charity*, for we must entirely love God, and His will, and love our neighbour in Him, and for His sake; and so have our souls at rest, and free from discontent, and from jarring thoughts,

³ Isa. xii. 1.

⁴ Hab. iii. 17, 18.

⁵ 1 John iii. 3.

which would distract us, and prevent that clearness of heart, out of which thanksgiving flows. We shall look at the things which are unseen, not at those sad and oppressive things which are seen; we shall thank God for those realities, and find all the more cause for thanksgiving, by contrasting those with the things which are seen. You will look rather at "that body which shall be,"⁶ than at "this vile body;"⁷ and you will thank God for it. Instead of looking at the points wherein your fellow-creatures give you pain, you will look at their love and their kindness, until you wonder at it, and at your own blindness, which could not see it heretofore. Instead of mourning over your privations, you will look with wonder at the innumerable gifts which are given to you. Instead of looking at yourself as unknown and unnoticed, you will learn to wonder that so many—sometimes even persons unknown to you—think of, and minister to you. Instead of mourning that not a tree is granted to you on which your weary eyes can rest, you will thank God that even streets do not shut out the sky, and that you can still gaze on that, and feel that it is the work of God. Instead of thinking of all your crosses, little and great, you will "turn away your eyes from beholding vanity,"⁸ and fix your eyes upon His cross, which was so sharp and so painful, and which was borne for you. What have you to liken to "His cross and passion?" The reviling of enemies; the forsaking of friends—

⁶ 1 Cor. xv. 37.⁷ Phil. iii. 21.⁸ Ps. cxix. 37.

even the dearest; the ignominy; the betrayal; the scourgings; and finally the crucifixion; what have you to liken to these things? *He*, and He alone, could say—"Was ever grief like mine?" And the more we gaze upon His suffering, the more our hearts will answer—"Never was grief like Thine." And thus we shall learn that ours are "light afflictions." And as our sense of sin deepens, our knowledge of His amazing love will deepen also, until we see, on His side, nothing but love—on our side nothing but deep ingratitude. You will wonder that your "eyes have been holden"⁹ so that you never saw this before, and have been going on, adding ingratitude to all your other sins.

When once you learn "in everything to give thanks, for this is the will of God concerning you,"¹ then the "voice of thanksgiving will be heard in your dwelling,"² and your heart will abound with thanksgiving.

When we feel that we owe much to a fellow-creature, how our hearts go out towards them in gratitude and love! what a pleasure it is to thank them, and to recognise their kindness! The more undeserving we feel, the more this will be the case. How much more then shall we feel it towards Him, "from whom cometh every good and every perfect gift?"³

Thanksgiving is a blessed and holy exercise: it elevates the whole being. You desire to glorify

⁹ Luke xxiv. 16.

² Ps. cxviii. 15.

¹ 1 Thess. v. 18.

³ James i. 17.

God ; He says, "Whoso offereth praise glorifieth Me : and to him that ordereth his conversation aright, will I show the salvation of God."⁴ If our hearts were tuned to praise, we should see causes unnumbered, which we had never seen before, for thanking God. "O give thanks unto the Lord, for He is gracious : for His mercy endureth for ever. Let the redeemed of the Lord say so, whom He hath redeemed from the hand of the enemy." "They wandered in the wilderness in a solitary way ; they found no city to dwell in. Hungry and thirsty, their soul fainted in them. Then they cried unto the Lord in their trouble, and He delivered them out of their distresses."⁵

Thanksgiving is spoken of as a "sacrifice well pleasing unto God."⁶ It is a far higher offering than prayer. When we pray we ask for things which we want ; or we tell out our sorrows. It is in one sense a selfish act. We pray, in order to bring down blessings upon ourselves ; we praise, because our hearts overflow with love to God, and we must speak it out to Him. The only reward that we expect, is the delight which it brings to us. How purifying it must be to go out of ourselves—to cease from thinking of what is good in us, that we may think how good He is ! It flows out of pure love, and then the love goes back to our hearts, and warms them anew, and revives and quickens them.

But remember that praise is a *sacrifice*—one that

⁴ Ps. l. 23.

⁵ Ps. cvii. 1 2, 4-6.

⁶ Phil. iv. 18.

God expects us to offer, and justly claims at our hands. We may not choose but to offer it; if we do not, we "rob God." "Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed Me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed Thee? In tithes and offerings."⁷ God says, "Let them sacrifice the sacrifice of thanksgiving, and declare His works with rejoicing."⁸ "Let Israel rejoice in Him that made him; let the children of Zion be joyful in their King."⁹ "Rejoice in the Lord."¹ "Rejoice in hope," and "patient in tribulation,"² are closely connected.

Let us then say, "I will offer to Thee the sacrifice of thanksgiving, and will call upon the name of the Lord."³

"I will sacrifice unto Thee with the voice of thanksgiving; I will pay that I have vowed." We often ask, "What shall I render unto the Lord for all His benefits unto me?"⁴ It is this sacrifice of thanksgiving that He would have us to render. We must offer it through our High Priest, for all our offerings need to be purged, and offered up purely for us. "By Him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks unto His name."⁵

⁷ Mal. iii. 8.

⁸ Ps. cxvi. 17.

⁹ Ps. cxlix. 2.

¹ Ps. xxxiii. 1.

² Rom. xii. 11.

³ Ps. cxvi. 17.

⁴ Ps. cxvi. 12.

⁵ Heb. xiii. 15.

VIII

To remember the Poor, and to aid others in
their Works of Mercy

HE wills that you should remember the poor. "The poor have ye always with you, but Me ye have not always."⁶ If you have a true and living sense of His love to yourself; if you feel that He has "done marvellous things for you,"⁷ "things you looked not for," you will feel that the large family which our Lord has left here on earth to be tended, and fed, and cared for, ought to claim a very large portion of your love, and your thoughts: and you will seek by what means, shut up as you are, you can help, and cheer, and bless them. There are many ways of doing so. If you are a member of a family, and not its head, it is probable that the very heavy expenses of sickness will not fall upon you; in this case your needs will be so much fewer than when you were going about in the world, that you will be able to redeem a larger portion of this world's goods for the poor. You can either minister to them by the hands of others, those of your family, or your pastor; or, if you are well enough, you may have the delight of ministering with your own hands to their necessities; you may send for them, one at a time, and give them

⁶ John xii. 8.⁷ Ps. xcvi. 1.

what you think they most need, inquiring into their necessities, becoming affectionately interested in all their little concerns. This, if you are able to do it from time to time, will be a great help to yourself; taking from you the objectless, lonesome feelings of sickness; and you will learn by such intercourse how light are your own trials and privations. It will give you many causes for thanksgiving. You have a comfortable room, kind attendance, food to eat, fire, and manifold blessings—they, perhaps, have but one small, dark, unwholesome room, for all purposes, in which a large family may be shut up in fever, with no other place but a hospital to go to; no fresh air, no fire (or but rarely); no attendant, and often without necessary food, clothing, or bedding. Let all your knowledge of trial draw out your deepest sympathies towards them, and let your knowledge of your blessings, and your wonderful exemption from such trials, stir up in you the spirit of praise. Perhaps you may be able to make clothes for them, or to provide for their being made; to send them food and other comforts. If you are the head of a family, you can easily arrange to have many things spared and saved for them, though your means may be very limited, and your burdens pressing heavily. The more we are looking out for opportunities of helping the poor, the more will the power and the will increase; and ways will open which were unseen before.

In giving to the poor so much depends on the manner in which it is done; a sympathizing manner

showing real care for them, with but a few kind words, will strike home to their hearts, however small the gift given : whereas, some great gift may be given harshly, or a lecture about want of prudence and economy may be given with it, which may take from the gift all its value, and make them feel only, how little the rich know of the wants of the poor, and how little they sympathize with them. You, especially, who have had the discipline of sickness and its privations, should show them tenderness and sympathy. If you cannot visit them yourself, or even see them when they come to your house, you will interest your servants in them, and make them your almoners. It will do them much good also, and will be a link between them and the poor, and between yourself and them. All your attempts to help the poor you will offer to God as your "sacrifice of thanksgiving ;"⁸ and will do all, "as unto the Lord, and not as unto men."⁹ In the same way, you will endeavour to aid every one who comes near you in their "work of faith and labour of love."¹ You will help them by any assistance of money, work, or advice you have it in your power to give ; nor will you do this the less although your work should be wholly hidden, and it should appear to be theirs alone. You will see how good this is for you ; and will gladly and thankfully see others working, and cheer them on their way, even though at times you may suffer from the pain of the contrast. You will seek also to

⁸ Ps. cxvi. 17.⁹ Col. iii. 23.¹ Heb. vi. 16.

interest yourself in *all* works of mercy ; in those societies and institutions, which are really trying to do the work of God, in an orderly and humble manner. Everything in which you can interest yourself, will open to you a fresh and wider field of enjoyment. Everything that belongs to God, and is furthering His work on earth, should have the deepest interest for you ; and you should seek to let it become increasingly a part of yourself, of your thoughts, your prayers, and your labours.

PART IV

THE BLESSINGS OF SICKNESS

THE Blessings of Sickness are so inseparably connected with its trials, and the danger of trying to look upon them apart from each other is so great, that throughout this volume they have been blended, and this chapter is intended merely to "gather up some of the fragments that remain, that nothing may be lost." "O how great is the sum of them if I should count them, they are more in number than the sand." Whoso is wise, and will observe these things, he shall understand the lovingkindness of the Lord.

The Blessings of Sickness

IT was a strange answer, you think, which came at last ; you had prayed for work, and He has sent you sickness, and laid you aside. He has seemed to “read all your prayers backwards,” and to answer you by contraries. “Doubt not, but earnestly believe,” that your sickness is the very best answer to your prayers ; that it meets them, and includes them all. In it, and by it, your works will be purified ; and, strange truth ! you will surely, if you use it aright, learn in sickness to “love life and see good days.”¹ You will learn to “joy in the gifts Heaven’s bounty sends :” to see every thing shining out in the brightness which the love of God sheds upon all things. You will learn so to love His will, that you will desire nothing but what He gives. Even now, there are great blessings to you, in being thus laid aside. Have you ever thought from how many evil things you have been kept by it ? how many extravagances you not only *might*, but certainly would have followed, which, by the mercy of God in sending sickness, have been

¹ Ps. xxxiv. 12.

selfishness and self-will, you find your work, and you fulfil it. Therefore, never let the weary, withering thought return to you, that you have no work, nothing to do for God, and you are an isolated being. Yet a little and "your work shall be rewarded;"⁸ "that which is hidden shall be made known,"⁹ and you and all mankind will see, that your sick-bed was no hindrance to working the work of God; that you had a work to do there which you could not have done elsewhere; a work not occasionally, but filling up every hour of the day, whether you were seemingly busy, or lying almost in a lethargy, or even in a dark room, taking no notice of anything which was passing around. Even there you were working, and God was by your side, appointing your work of suffering, and its measure, and its nature, and blessing it to you; and without that, the work which He has given to the Church to do would be imperfect. In the extremest languor, in the utmost weariness or sharpness of pain, say to yourself, "This is the will of God; thus it is His will that I should work for Him; my portion is now to 'fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for His Body's sake, which is the Church.'"¹ What a glorious work! What an honour to be called to it! How often in His sufferings here upon earth He was alone, and none saw what He endured, except His Father and our Father. Yet even then, He was fulfilling His ministry; and so it is with you.

⁸ Jer. xxxi. 16.⁹ Luke xii. 2.¹ Col. i. 24.

Faint not then ; your spirit may be growing very weary, but strengthen your heart with the thought, that you are suffering with, and for, Christ, and for "His Body's sake, which is the Church." Think, too, when you are "weary and faint in your mind,"² of what He endured, and then of the high calling which it is to suffer with Him ; to have the "fellowship of His sufferings, and to be made conformable to His death."³

He who has called you to this work and office is with you, and will "be with you alway, even unto the end,"⁴ sustaining, strengthening, and cheering you.

One more blessing you have ; which is, that the Lord's Prayer is no longer a form to you, or even merely words which you have pleasure in repeating. You want it now—it is necessary to your life ; and every word of it has become full of meaning, such as it never had before ; every sentence is a life-giving sound. Very often when you are unable to say any words of your own, to think any thought of your own, you can pray this prayer in your heart, and give thanks for it. Your extreme weakness and dependence ; your want of some person to rest on—to turn to in all your trials, and sorrows, and pains, and perplexities ; One who knew them all, and "needed not that any man should teach Him, for He knew what was in man,"⁵ have taught you to say, "Our Father,"⁶ with a love and tenderness

² Heb. xii. 3.

³ Phil. iii. 10.

⁴ Matt. xxviii. 20.

⁵ John ii. 25.

⁶ Matt. vi. 9.

and confidence which you never knew before: and you rejoice to say "*our*" because it tells you that you are a member of a family, and not a solitary being: and when you say, "which art in heaven," then you are reminded of that "rest which remaineth for the people of God:"⁷ "an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation."⁸

All the eager and restless desires of your life for the glory of God, and the advancement of His kingdom, seem now to find their centre and resting-place in the words—"Hallowed be Thy name, Thy kingdom come:" all your personal desires and wishes, for yourself, your friends, and all mankind, to be expressed for you in "Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven." You daily need to be led and guided; and to have your work and your strength, your trials and your supports, and all your earthly needs—summed up in the petition, "Give us this day our daily bread;" your growing sense of sin, your knowledge of your continual "sins, negligences, and ignorances;" your deep sense of lovelessness, and sufferings from it, make your whole heart to say, "Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us." The ever-growing sense of temptation—of being "sore let and hindered"—of "the temptations of the world, the flesh, and the devil"—all these make your heart to cry out, "Lead us not into tempta-

⁷ Heb. iv. 9.

⁸ 1 Pet. i. 4, 5.

tion, but deliver us from evil." There is assurance in asking all these things, for "Thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory, for ever and ever:" and therefore you say "Amen, so be it." All things are in His hand, and all that you have asked He can grant. You seem to begin each petition with, "Our Father;" for those two words explain and run through the prayer, and give you the child-like confidence in asking, which you so greatly need.

"Our Father!" let those words blend themselves with every thought of your heart, with every action of your life. Surely "Our Father" would "deal with us as with sons;"² and would send us no needless suffering, no unnecessary correction. "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear Him."¹ He would not give us into other hands for correction. He Himself will correct: "He will correct us in measure; yet will He not leave us wholly unpunished."²

"'Blessed are ye that weep' now, whether in contradiction, or bereavement, or sickness, or fear. Every visitation is a stage of advance in your walk of faith. Every chastisement is sent to open a new page in the great Book of Life—to show you things within you which you knew not, and things which hereafter shall be your portion. He is cleansing the power of sight in you, that it may become intense and strong to bear His presence: and that power of sight is love; fervent and purifying love,

² Heb. xii. 7.

¹ Ps. ciii. 13.

² Jer. xlii. 28.

consuming every sin, and purging out every stain. The more fervently you cleave to Him by love, the clearer shall be your vision of His beauty. Then welcome all He sends, if so be we may see Him at last, where there is no more sin, where truth has no shadow, where unity and sanctity have no dispute. Welcome sorrow, trial, fear, and the shadow of death, if only our sin be blotted out, and out lot secure in the lowest room, in the light of His face, before the throne of His beauty, in our home, and in our rest for ever."

PART V

MISCELLANEOUS




Miscellaneous

I

Reading the Scriptures

THERE is a very desultory kind of reading, even of the Holy Scriptures, in which the sick often indulge. They can read but little, and therefore they often choose the portions which they like the best, and think will be the most profitable to them. Thus they lose much of the meaning of the Bible, by taking it in detached passages, instead of in its connexion ; by taking verses apart from the context, they often get a false idea of the meaning ; and many portions which would be very instructive to them they never read : choosing for themselves what their food is to be, instead of having it given to them. To have some plan in reading is a very great help, and especially to those who are so much taken from the ordinary helps in this way. It is pleasant to look to some one to guide us and teach us, and to tell us what to do ; and it prevents that vague feeling of wanting to



know what it is best to do, and how to read the Scriptures the most profitably. "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect—thoroughly furnished unto all good works."¹ Therefore we should read *all* Scripture; otherwise we shall omit something that is "profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction." Reading detached chapters and verses does not answer the same end.

Can there be a better rule than the one given by the Church? And if we read the daily Lessons and Psalms, as far as our strength permits, we shall read the Old Testament once every year, and the New Testament three times, and the Psalms twelve times through. We shall soon find how wonderfully each Lesson and each Psalm seems to bring something peculiarly fitted to our need at that very time: and every day, as we read them afresh, we shall find this more and more, and be able to appropriate them as the portion *given* to us for our profit, and not self-chosen. And we shall have the happiness of not reading alone, but with "many members of the one body."²

Do not fear that it will degenerate into a mere form; it will grow less and less so as you pursue it. But sick people need not have so much fear of forms—they, perhaps, of all others, need them the most—for they are deprived of so many that come

¹ 2 Tim. iii. 16, 17.

² 1 Cor. xii. 12.

in the natural order of things to people in health, that they are in great danger of growing desultory.

Often a husk may be thrown away as useless, not knowing that it contains a precious kernel. The husk may look to you like other husks—unsightly and valueless; but you cannot get at, or preserve the kernel without it. At any rate, do not throw it away until you have well examined it; and in this case the only way of thoroughly testing it is by long and daily practice.

II

Sunday

ANOTHER subject of trial to sick people is the Sunday. Some feel this much more acutely than others. The want of public worship is, and ought to be, a great trial to you; the loss of assembling together, of having a place "where prayer is wont to be made,"³ where many are praying together, thus helping each other; where God is especially felt to be present; and where a fixed time is appointed for prayer, the quiet of which cannot be broken in upon by outward distractions and interruptions. Besides this, there is a wonderful help in the sympathy of many worshipping together; our sluggish souls need every help: also the *voice* of prayer is a great assistance, and

³ Acts xvi. 13


keeps up the attention. And when praise is offered, the heart is lifted up with others, and at least the "voice of melody"⁴ ascends. There, also, the fulfilment of the promise may especially be claimed: "Where two or three are gathered together in My name, I will be with them;"⁵ and there is the realization of the Church; of being many members of one body; so that we learn to say, "I believe in the Holy Catholic Church, the communion of saints."

All these blessings are withheld from the sick; the cheerful sound of the Church bells does but remind them that they "cannot go up to the house of the Lord;" and would sound with painful sadness in their ears, if they were not learning the lesson to "rejoice with them that do rejoice."⁶

The degree to which the absence from public worship tells on private devotion, they can best declare who have been for months or years debarred from it. The habit, the fixedness, the place, are all wanting. It is a very difficult thing day after day to continue devotions in the same unchanged place; with nothing outward to call you away from the world, to call you to worship. In that very room, that very bed, perhaps, you must carry on everything; there are your pains and sicknesses; there you see your friends; you take your meals; you transact all your worldly business; you sleep; there it is that everything which fills up your life is carried on. The outward helps of being *called* to

⁴ Isa. li. 3⁵ Matt. xviii. 20⁶ Rom. xii. 15.

worship; of going to the house of God; of the companionship of worship, you never have. You see others go, you sometimes wish that they would so connect you with their blessings and enjoyments, as to say occasionally, that they wish you could go with them; you would not wish it always, for then it would become a formality. Probably it is their kindness that withholds them, though they may be mistaken as to what is the best for you. They suppose, in most cases, that after so many months or years of confinement to the house, you must be quite used to it, and have long ceased to desire to go to Church, feeling that it must not, cannot be, and so they fear to stir up your longings afresh. Or, they look on your being left at home as so completely a matter of course, that they either forget that it is so, or that it can be any trial to you; or else they suppose that you *ought* to be reconciled to it; and that if you are not, you are very wrong. Or they may think it a mere form to say words which imply an impossibility. Or they cannot, perhaps, fully understand the measure and depth of the trial, because when during any short illness they have been kept at home, it may be that they have had particular enjoyment of the day; and certainly they could not feel the effects that it produces on private devotion in so short a time. This also accounts for the fact, that when sick people begin to recover, after a long illness, and are able to go to Church again, if they are prevented for one or more Sundays, they show great disappointment;



and friends say, "I wonder that you should so much mind being kept at home for one or two Sundays, when you remember for how very long a time you were prevented from going; surely one Sunday cannot now be much of a privation to you." It is just because you have been shut up so long, that you feel the more keenly each hindrance now. You have learned the value of public worship; besides which, you feel how uncertain is your tenure of the blessing, and you do not like to pass by one opportunity whilst you have it.

When your friends return from Church, you long to be connected with what they have been enjoying; how thankful you would feel to be *voluntarily* told about the sermon, or even the text!

Sometimes you think that people ought at least to *look* happier and more cheerful on Sunday than on other days; you feel that their blessings are great, that it ought to be the brightest of days to them; for it seems to be its very brightness that casts so dark a shadow on you. It appears to you that they often look more weary, and seem more uncomfortable on that day than on any other. You do not take into account that they have weary bodies, which have been worn by the toil of the week; and that the very rest from that seems to bring weariness or listlessness. Neither do you take into account, what a busy and occupied day it generally is, and how very little time they have to spare to you, and that little is when they are tired with the labours and pleasures of the day;

and the spirit having been so much engaged, is weary too.

There are, doubtless, some cases in which it would produce discontent, if it were said to a sick person, "I wish you could go with us." A few it might leave in tears,—either those who have been ill but a short time, and who have not as yet seen that they are wrong in indulging the temptations to eager longing,—or even to envy those who can go to Church,—or else those who encourage discontent in this and other forms, "refusing to be comforted." In the majority of cases, it would be found that the kindness of the words, and the pleasant thought that others would like you to share in their pleasures, would prove a great help, and refresh and cheer your weary spirits long after the words had been forgotten by the person who spoke them. It seems half to take you to Church in spirit,—at any rate it gives a realization of the Communion of Saints,—to some minds of course more deeply than to others. "I wish you could go with us." "*In spirit I can,*" the heart answers, and already the feeling of isolation is gone, and in place of it is, "I believe in the Holy Catholic Church, the communion of saints."

On the other hand, how often the sick person feels, as the last person leaves the house for Church, "If they cared that I should go with them, surely they would sometimes say so; how then can I hope that they will remember me there? I am cut off from fellowship."

These feelings are of course wrong and morbid,

—they ought not to be cherished at all, they should be earnestly resisted,—but that they will offer themselves to you as temptations, there can be but little doubt. The only way to meet them is to say, “I am here by the will of God ;” and to fix it in your heart that you can expect no blessing anywhere but in the place that He appoints for you. You are the “prisoner of the Lord,” and so, when you pray for “all prisoners and captives,” you will feel that you can pray for them, for you have many wants and trials in common with them. As such you are to “walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, with all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, forbearing one another in love ; endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit, in the bond of peace. There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling ; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.”⁷ And whilst these verses tell you your duties, they do at the same time tell you how great are your blessings,—that you are in the unity of the Church,—that sickness is not a state of isolation, for “there is *one* body,”—the whole Church is one family, of which some are sick, and some in health, each needing the other, and unable to go on without the varied and reciprocal offices.

People often say that “you can as well say your prayers at home.” It seems to you that this is not the fact ; nevertheless be sure that when God calls

⁷ Eph. iv. 1-6.

you to do so, He will make all grace to abound towards you, and will not suffer your "soul to hunger."⁸ He who fed the five thousand with so few loaves and fishes, will surely feed you. "Bread shall be given you, and your water shall be sure."⁹ He will feed you, though often you may see no bread, but this does not hinder you from receiving it: sometimes it may seem to you very bitter,—sometimes very dry,—it may rarely be "pleasant bread."¹ Fear not, though thus it may be, and "though the scent of water"² may be far off, yet He can feed you and give you to drink;—He who gave you life, will sustain it;—He can exactly adapt the daily portion of bread to your need; He will make it sufficient to sustain you, and to enable you to go on your way. Only do not seek to choose your food, but let Him give you the "bread which is convenient and necessary for you."³

You wish to spend your Sundays differently from all other days, but the difficulty is *how* to do it; you have, perhaps, a great deal more quiet time and leisure for reading, than on other days, but you cannot go on reading always, and you have not the variation of daily life, and of seeing friends, scarcely even your own family.

Have you tried, as much as possible, to make your Sundays like what they would be if you could go to Church, and like your own past Sundays? You used to go to Church; *there* was an appointed

⁸ Deut. viii. 3.

² Job xiv. 9.

⁹ Isa. xxxiii. 16.

³ Prov. xxx. 8.

¹ Dan. x. 3.

service; a guide and direction to your devotions and thoughts. A service that *all* joined in,—not only in the particular church to which you went, but throughout England. Was it not intended for *all* the members of the Church? Then it belongs to *you*, for you are “a sick member.”

If, when you know that the Service is beginning to be read at Church, you begin to read it also; then you may join with all who are worshipping everywhere, and you will cease to feel cut off and isolated. When you begin to do this at first it may appear to you formal; at any rate it will seem very flat, without any one to respond, without any hymns of praise, and you will have little, if any, pleasure in it. Do not be disappointed by this,—do not leave off the practice because of it,—for every time you try (after awhile) you will find more pleasure, and profit, and blessing in it, and feel more as you were joining “the great congregation.”⁴ Perhaps, too, you will find the reading the Services alone and slowly brings out to you new beauties which you never saw before. Your circumstances, too, may bring home to your heart some prayers and petitions, which hitherto you had only “heard with the hearing of the ear.”⁵ Especially in reading the Litany, you can bring in the cases of your own friends, separately, naming them in your heart, “widows,” the “fatherless children,” the “sick,” “all prisoners and captives,” &c., and this will give life to it, and enable you to be “helpers of their

⁴ Ps. xxii. 25.

⁵ Job xlii. 5.

joy,"⁶ and will connect you with others who are "sitting solitary."

Do not say that it would be formal thus to read the Services at home, that they are meant for public worship, and that to use forms in private, and especially in a sick-room, is a bondage and formality. If you *are* cut off from the Church by sickness, *then* you have no part in her Services. It cannot be more formal to offer these prayers in private than in public; they are for the *whole* Church, and therefore for *you*. You often complain of the exceeding difficulty of fixing your thoughts, and offering your own words in prayer,—here are words for you, true and holy words, which all ages have been uttering, exactly fitted to your wants, now and at all times. Sick people need guides for their thoughts and words more than others do; and they, who have tried the plan of reading the Services during the hours of public worship, can speak of the exceeding blessing that it has been to them.

If you are unable to read the whole Service, you can read some part of it; the Confession, and as much as you have strength for besides; or the Litany only.

If you are able to read much at a time, then, when you have read the Service, you can read a sermon; after that, you surely had better lie still for a time, and do nothing. Then gladly take the refreshment of seeing any of your family, or any

⁶ 2 Cor. i. 24.

⁷ Lam. i. 1.

friend who may come to see you. In the afternoon or evening, you may be able to read the Service again; and thus you will not find Sunday a tedious or a lonesome day, but will especially enjoy the rest and refreshing which it offers—the entire relaxation from the work of other days. To many sick people, the calm and rest of this holy day is peculiarly delightful. When they wake in the morning, they begin to feel the difference, and to give thanks that on this day the world may be shut out, and other thoughts may fill up the heart, without interruption from outward things, or from daily domestic duties. They feel refreshed in spirit, and the better enabled to go on their way during the week to come, because of this “day of refreshing from the presence of the Lord.”⁸ The more a love for this day is cultivated, the more it will become a glad day—a day to be reckoned upon all the week, and rejoiced in when it comes. Thus it will become the pledge and foretaste of the “rest which remaineth;”⁹ the rest which they long for.

If, at any time, you can get any one to read the Service with you, it is a great help and pleasure; but you will not greatly need this, if you always consider yourself as in the congregation, and that you are truly one of the worshippers. You are not alone, “All the company of Heaven laud and magnify His glorious name.” “Wherefore, seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin

⁸ Acts iii. 19.

⁹ Heb. iv. 9.

which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith."

III

The Holy Communion

WHEN first sickness comes, those who have truly cared for the blessing of joining in the Holy Communion at Church, keenly feel their absence from it; and especially when the days return for its accustomed celebration, they seem more than ever isolated and alone. This feeling may in part be removed, and much blessing found, by reading the Communion Service at the time when others are engaged in that service in the Church where you have been accustomed to worship; or, if you have not strength for the whole, at least read some portion of it.

You have been accustomed to think of this as merely a public service. But surely this cannot be the only view of it, since the Church has appointed a separate service (or at least an introductory service) for the Communion of the Sick, and thus shown that it is meant also for them. And a Rubric tells you, that you may eat of it by faith, when you are *truly* hindered from doing so actually.

But sick people should not be content with merely

¹⁰ Heb. xii. 1, 2.

thus partaking. The circumstances are rare and peculiar, in which it is not their bounden duty, as well as their highest privilege and blessing, to eat of the Body, and to drink of the Blood of our Lord.

Cases may occur in which they are visited by no clergyman ; still they are authorized by the Church to send for him, and to ask him for this service. If circumstances make it impossible to get this blessing from the minister of the parish, or district, at any rate leave may be obtained to ask some friend, or some one through a friend, to minister to you.

There are very many hindrances, and many and great difficulties, which almost every sick person finds on this subject. Generally speaking, most of them are either groundless, or may be overcome by prayer for guidance and strength. One hindrance is the peculiar shyness which sick people feel in mentioning their desire ; this probably is common to almost all, and does not entirely depend on natural shyness. It arises from many causes, perhaps the most frequent are : a dislike to giving trouble.—The fear of seeming to make too much of yourself or your state.—A dislike to speaking of self and your own wishes.—A fear lest others should think thereby that you are, or fancy yourself, more holy than you feel that you are.—A feeling of awkwardness.—The thought that you cannot enjoy, or even take pleasure in, the service unless it were in Church.—A fear of interruptions, and of not choos-

ing a suitable time.—An idea that you will wait until you are stronger; for perhaps you may ere long go to Church again.—And, lastly, the fear lest by proposing such a service, your friends should be alarmed, and suppose that you think yourself to be dying.

One or more of these thoughts may have haunted the minds of most sick persons.

Perhaps a close examination of these difficulties would prove some of them to be quite groundless. It is like saying that a clergyman is not willing to do the work which his Master has given him to do, if we fear that he will count such service a trouble.

If it were your *own* desire alone, you might fear the making too much of yourself, or your state. But remember Who has *commanded* you, “Do this in remembrance of Me.”¹ He said it, in the upper chamber, in that last night, when already His sufferings had begun. Think you, will *He* count your obedience to His command self-indulgence? Remember what He wills, and do not think merely of how your fellow-creatures may judge you. But surely it is generally unreasonable to fancy such a thing of them.

The dislike to speaking of self, and your own wishes, may proceed too far, and become a morbid feeling, which it certainly is if it hinders us from doing the will of God.

Fear not lest others should think you more holy

¹ 1 Cor. xi. 24.

than you are, but try to be as holy as He who is holy would have you to be. Never mind the thoughts of your fellow-creatures. "I the Lord search the heart, I try the reins of the children of men."² May there not also be in this a mixture of fear, lest you should be expected to live more consistently and holily, if you thus "show forth His death?"³ And is not this a device of the enemy, who would hinder you hereby?

That feeling of awkwardness is very painful, but it soon wears off; the more frequent the communion, the less it is felt.

It is surely true, that it is far less like *communion* in a sick-room, than in the Church. For the holy place, the many uniting, and all the associations, are the greatest help to worship: nevertheless, when God calls any one aside into their chamber, He expects them to worship Him *there* and not at Church, and it is *there* that He meets with them and blesses them. They will not fail to find His presence, if they really expect it and believe in it. The fear of interruptions, and of not choosing a suitable time, can be obviated by setting apart a special time, which is the freest from interruptions, and making it a stated service at that time, whether more or less frequent, according to circumstances.

In merely a short illness, in which there is the hope of speedy recovery, it may be well to wait until you can go to Church. But in any long illness, and especially in a life-long sickness, it is

² Jer. xvii. 10.

³ 1 Cor. xi. 26.

merely robbing yourself of a blessing, which you never needed perhaps so much before.

The Church specifies three times in the year as the *least* possible number for any one to communicate, who considers himself as a member of the Church of England. Nor are sick persons excluded from this order, if they are members of the Church.

It is easy to prevent causing alarm to your friends by the proposal, if you tell them why you desire it; not from any idea of the immediate approach of death, but from feeling that it is your highest duty and blessing. It is a great mistake to wait until your dying hour before you avail yourself of so great a help in living to God, and in suffering His holy will. Because it has so often been looked upon in this light, people are apt to fancy that it is required chiefly in cases of dangerous sickness. No strength or help can be so great in a dying hour; and it is a great blessing for those who can then have the comfort. But we need grace and help and strength to *suffer*, as well as to die: whilst living, to live unto the Lord. Surely, no slight hindrance, nothing that can possibly be overcome, ought to prevent us from seeking this blessing; from fulfilling this command of our suffering and dying Lord and Master.

What He has commanded He likewise desires, He says, "With desire have I desired to eat this passover with you."⁴ He is ready,—is inviting us,—and will be truly present with us. He is ready;

⁴ Luke xxii. 15.

the unreadiness is only on our side. He is willing; —the unwillingness is wholly on our part. He invites us; it is we who refuse.

The more frequently sick persons can communicate, the less will be the feeling of strangeness and inability to enjoy the Service. They will eat and live; will feel strengthened to go on their weary, painful way; will be raised above suffering by “looking unto Jesus, the author and the finisher of their faith; who, for the joy that was set before Him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down on the right hand of the throne of God.”⁵

Thus will they best learn to “endure as seeing Him who is invisible,”⁶ and to “go from strength to strength, until they appear in Zion before God.”⁷ Let no hindrances, no fears, no delays, rob you then of this your “bounden duty and service;” “lay aside every weight,” and ask Him to overcome all difficulties in you, and for you. Look upon it as a duty; and you will soon find that it can be fulfilled. Beware of suffering yourself to make excuses, lest you should find that “such excuses are not so easily accepted and allowed before God.” If any special thing burdens your mind; any fear that some particular sin is a hindrance; the Church directs you to lay it before “some discreet and learned minister of God’s word.”

Perhaps you have a fear lest your great bodily weakness should prevent you from attending, and that you shall but give outward worship, your

⁵ Heb. xii. 2.

⁶ Heb. xi. 27.

⁷ Ps. lxxxiv. 7.

thoughts the meanwhile either wandering, or being literally *absent* and beyond your control. Do not fear this. "He knoweth your frame, and remembereth that you are dust."⁸ He will only require and expect of you as much service and attention as you are able to render, and He knows how much that is, and expects no more.

Sometimes sick people have found that they were raised far above their weakness, and for the time enabled to forget it. It is a good plan to make it a special subject of prayer previously; to ask that you may forget your body and yourself: that you may forget the presence of every one, and only be conscious of His presence, who has invited you to meet Him, and to "eat His flesh and drink his blood."

And even, if it must be that you cannot attend to the whole Service, there will be a hallowed calm feeling shed around you; and portions of it you will understand and enjoy. At times the blessing may be even greater to you afterwards than you were aware of at the time. Do not distress yourself when the Service is ended, or in time to come by thinking how little power you had of attention. Say rather, "'Lord, Thou knowest all things; Thou knowest that I love Thee;'⁹ accept my poor, weak, broken service, 'not weighing my merits, but pardoning my offences,' for the sake of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen."

⁸ Ps. ciii. 14.

⁹ John xxi. 17.

IV

Prayer for Recovery

SICK people are often perplexed by the question, whether it is right to pray for recovery?

Some people urge the duty of their doing so, as if they ought to "take heaven by violence;"¹ others, on the contrary, think that the doing so is a proof of want of submission,—that illness is sent by God, and therefore we should not wish it otherwise. Most certainly, if our heavenly Father gave us everything that we ask, just because we ask it,—and granted all our desires, just because He would not deny us anything, then we ought to ask for nothing but what He has already given us, and never to tell Him our desires, lest, when we think that we are asking for "a fish," it should prove "a stone."²

Where then would be the comfort or the *rest* of prayer? But as He gives us only those things that are *really* good for us,—as He withholds everything that would prove evil to us,—as He so mercifully denies us when we pray for things which would not fulfil His gracious purposes towards us,—we need not fear to tell Him *all* our wishes, *all* our desires, and to leave it to Him to grant them or to deny them, as "seemeth good in His sight,"³—we

¹ Matt. xi. 12.² Luke xi. 11.³ Luke x. 21.

may "*rest* in His love,"⁴ as well in this as in all things. It would be a great want of child-like confidence to keep back anything from Him. Let us not fear to tell Him all,—to lay our wayward desires before Him, and let Him teach us by His discipline, whether they be good or no. Therefore, if you desire to recover, do not fear to tell Him. If you told it to a fellow-creature, they might say, "It proves a sad want of submission to have such a wish," but do not fear to tell Him,—keep nothing back from Him,—it is not sincere to do so,—"He requireth truth in the inward parts."⁵ Ask Him in this thing also, to conform you to His will, and then, surely, "if in any thing ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you."⁶

When first a person is visited with sickness, it is surely a duty to pray that, if it be the will of God, he may recover his bodily health. Nor indeed only then, for the Church teaches us, even at the latest period of sickness, to pray, "We know, O Lord, that no word is impossible with Thee; and that if Thou wilt Thou canst even yet raise him up, and grant him a longer continuance amongst us." And so in the Collect in the Service for "the Communion of the Sick," there is a prayer that "he may recover his bodily health," but it is added, "if it be Thy gracious will." And this seems a fit pattern for our prayers for recovery. We ought to ask it, for it would seem like an undervaluing of life if we did not; but we ought always to ask, "if

⁴ Zeph. iii. 17.

⁵ Ps. li. 6.

⁶ Phil. iii. 15

it be Thy will," and seek to be content in whatever form the answer may come. No shrinking from life, and its cares and duties, should keep us from it: no imagination that the temptations of health are greater than those of sickness. We must indeed be novices in sickness to suppose this, and not yet to have discovered that it is but a *change* of temptations and trials, and that no one can say which are the greatest, those of health or those of sickness; for they are so different that they cannot be compared. Besides, this would be underrating the power of God, who is able to strengthen us, and to "keep us from falling," under any circumstances whatsoever. It is impossible, whilst life remains, ever to know that any one will not recover, or that their "sickness is unto death;" but when it seems to be a case of life-long sickness; when we have once and again asked that the thorn may be removed; if still, as in St. Paul's case, it is not permitted to "depart from" us, then let us be contented with the assurance, "My grace is sufficient for thee." Doubtless henceforth he was content, and only asked, day by day, for the fulfilment of the promise, and for ability to do, and to suffer, his Master's will "in that state of life unto which it had pleased God to call" him. The constant asking to have it removed, either in his or in our case would have produced a very restless, unsatisfied spirit—a desire for that which it was not the will of God to give. We must day by day pray

at God will give us the measure of grace and strength which we need, to enable us to do His will. But whenever you feel inclined to ask for renewed health, do not check it, or fear to tell your wishes to your heavenly Father, leaving it to Him to grant or to deny them as He sees best for you.



PART VI

CONVALESCENCE



Convalescence

I

Its Pleasures and its Trials

IF you have ever known, in times past, the trials of returning to health and life, it cannot be wondered at, that you shrink from the thought. To some persons the trial is great indeed. You may, at some past time in your life, have had some serious illness, which threatened to take the life of your body from you. You may have been told that recovery was impossible, and that a few short hours would "end the strife." It may be that you heard the announcement with a very thankful heart, that you did not fear to die; and that you had long looked for the welcome summons. Hour after hour passed away, still you were here on earth, to the surprise of your medical attendant, and of all your friends. It seemed to them that you could not struggle through it—you felt that you were putting off your armour; that soon all temptations would be ended—all possibility of sinning left be-

hind, and that you should soon "be for ever with the Lord."¹ But it pleased Him to call you back to live here longer. The crisis passed; you were told that you would now recover your bodily health. Alas for you! You had taken leave of friends; had done, as you thought, with earth and its allurements, and must you return to that "waste howling wilderness?"² You find it a much harder thing to be content to *live*, than to be content and willing to *die*. "'Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me.'³ O take me where I would be; let me go to Thee; let me cease from sin; O let me be at rest for ever!" That first severe conflict has ended; you feel that God is love, and say, "Thy will be done."

Then comes the first glow of returning health; the feelings of joy and exhilaration that it brings, at least for a few hours or minutes of the day; for the exhaustion and consequent depression must be felt also.

The delight, too, of the passing away of pain, of the return of independence, and of the pleasure of doing something more for yourself each day. Above all the congratulations, and exceeding love and kindness of friends. You did not think that they cared so much for you; that your life and your love were so important to them; you seem the one object of all your friends, and you feel that the delight your recovery has given them, and the new knowledge you have received of their love, was

¹ 1 Thess. iv. 17.

² Deut. xxxii. 10

³ Matt. xxvi. 39.

worth any suffering, and that you have not obtained it at too great a price.

But your trial is not ended yet ; these pleasant feelings, this first glow of returning health, must pass away ; in exchange, you will have exceeding weariness and languor, which will induce great depression of spirits, a train of nervous and most distressing feelings will arise out of your weakness, and this again will tell upon your mind. Instead of the pleasure of finding that each day you can do more, for sometime it will seem to you either that you can do less each day, or that you are stationary. You will seem to grow weaker in mind and body ; you fancy that friends are less loving and considerate than they were at first. You forget, that though for the time of anxiety, when they thought that they should have you but for a few days, their usual occupations were laid aside, and their thoughts centred in you ; it could not always be so. You must now be content to have that scattered through your life, which was gathered up into a short space ; to receive, almost unconsciously, the gentle shower of love from hour to hour, instead of the full tide which flowed so delightfully upon you. Alas for you ! You must return to the bustle and flutter of life again ; all the temptations which used to assault you, will return now ; you will have the bitter trial of finding that you are just as open to them as before, with, it seems to you, less strength to meet them. You thought that in sickness you had lost your susceptibility to them : they did not assail you

then ; and you did not perceive that the reason of this is, that you had a change of temptations, a change of trials, but *not* an exemption from them. You thought that you were much more changed and renewed by illness than it now appears to you is the case. Then spiritual realities were ever present to you ; the world unseen seemed very near to you ; the friends who are at rest seemed ever around your bed ; sometimes they alone seemed to you real, and you had far closer communion with them, than with those about you. You thought that this state was so much a part of you, that it would always last ; that the power of the world was gone ; the charm all broken, and never to be renewed. But now, the spiritual realities are becoming less real, they seem daily to fade more and more from your sight ; the world around, by slow and imperceptible degrees, gains its hold of you ; earthly things fasten upon you ; the cares and business of earth engross you : your lawful calling is fast filling up your heart ; and because it is your *lawful* calling, it is the more insinuating and dangerous.

You have not recovered your full strength,—every little thing takes hold, and fastens upon you,—each little fatigue is a very great one to you,—you become irritable and fretful,—dissatisfied with yourself and all around ;—then you look back at the time so lately gone, in which you seemed so different ;—you think yourself in a far worse state than you ever were,—you are very deeply discouraged,—you think that friends misunderstand you,

—and you say, “My soul is weary of life.”⁴ And then you think that you had entered the river,—the soles of your feet were wetted,—you went still deeper down, and yet after all you were called back to life ; called back for you know not how long ; and all that seemed done, must be done afresh.

You think that you shall never believe again, when you are told that you are dying ; that until the last enemy has actually done his work, you shall be always expecting that another disappointment will come.

It is better to feel that the times and the seasons are hidden from you ; only do not let it make you unwatchful, but lead you to much more earnest watching, because you “know not the day nor the hour when the Son of Man cometh.”⁵

Much of this discouragement is physical, and arises from the returning to the duties and fatigues and wear of life, with a weakened body and shattered nerves. Have patience with this state ; it will pass away by degrees as strength returns ; *impatience* with it will greatly add to your trial and distress. It must be,—take it as a necessary humiliation,—as a proof that there is much yet to be wrought in you before you are ready for the Master’s presence,—lie down in quiet submission to His “Fatherly correction,”—He will teach you very much by this process : if you will only “learn of Him who is meek and lowly in heart, you shall find rest unto your soul.”⁶ You needed yet to be shown

⁴ Job x. 1.

⁵ Mark xiii. 32.

⁶ Matt. xi. 29.

what was in your heart. You must learn it in His way, not in your own. Believe also, that by all this discipline, He is preparing you for life ; for serving Him better, and for understanding and helping your brethren more than you have ever yet done.

He has work yet for you to do ; do it cheerfully and without murmuring ; be very thankful to be employed for Him in any way that He pleases.

II

The being called back to Life when Death seemed near, and how to become content with this Lot

THERE are some persons who have eagerly desired death during many long years : who have been brought very near it, even to its gates, and yet have been called back to life, and learned to love it. The struggle has been a very severe one : at first, when they were called back, they could scarcely bear the trial and its extreme disappointment ; they had fully thought to go ; and they must stay. They thought that suffering was ended, and now there is before them only a prospect of its long continuance. They thought that they should soon be out of the reach of temptations, and they are called to return to them all. One step more, and they believed that their weary pilgrimage would end ; instead of which, it stretches before them as a sea without a shore.

Or it may be, that they have had the expectation of immediate departure, and instead of this, are called to lie seemingly in the arms of death for even weeks and months; all the time, they may be eagerly looking for the welcome summons, and growing very impatient of the long delay.

They may, perhaps, have had very right and true thoughts and desires; they may really have desired to "depart," that they might "be with Christ,"⁷ and not from lower motives. But even in such a desire there may be an unchastened eagerness, a want of entire submission, which the "Refiner" saw it necessary to purge out and purify. He accepts, most lovingly, the desire to be with Him, though He may not see fit to grant it at present, but makes His children wait a little longer, until their will is wholly one with His will; and what He wishes, that, and that alone, they wish also. It is only for our blessing that He keeps us here, for our Lord has said, "Father, I will that they also, whom Thou hast given Me, be with Me where I am: that they may behold My glory."⁸ His will is to have all His children gathered into His presence, but His love often waits long for the fulfilment, that they may be perfected.

It is often long before the soul perceives this; in the meantime it is tormented by hard thoughts of God,—by impatience at the delay,—by restlessness, discontent, weariness of life, disappointment, and, at times, by rebellion against His holy will.

⁷ Phil. i. 23.

⁸ John xvii. 24.

But He will not leave it thus; He will "subdue our iniquities,"¹ and bring our wills to "the obedience of faith."² "Almighty God, who alone can order the unruly wills and affections of sinful men" will "order" yours. With some it is a very long process, with others much more rapid; but that "patient waiting for Christ"³ the Lord alone can "direct the heart unto." It is not soon attained,—the steps are commonly very slow, the disappointments very great,—it often seems like walking in very slippery weather: we seem to go back as many steps as we set forward.

First, there may be an occasional willingness to live, which alternates with an earnest desire to die. Then, by degrees, the willingness may be more steadfast and abiding, until it is clearly felt and seen that God speaks, saying, "To abide in the flesh is more needful for thee;"³ and the soul answers, "Having this confidence, I know that I shall abide and continue." It is this assurance of the will of God that changes the whole mind; nor does it less change the character; it produces a quiet submission, and chastens the whole man. There is no longer a struggle; no longer the sense of "*This* is His will, but *that* is mine; I *must* submit, for I cannot help it; O that He would will it otherwise!" It is changed to, "This is His will, and because it is His will, therefore it is my will,—my will ever leads me astray, I would cease from it for ever,

¹ Micah vii. 19.

² 2 Thess. iii. 5.

¹ Rom. xvi. 26.

³ Phil. i. 24, 25.

and know only His will,—I always find rest in this, —all else is unrest to me ; I can rest in His love, and tarry until He calls me.”

And besides the certainty of its being His will, there comes also a deep sense of thankfulness to be allowed to do anything for Him ; to work in any way ; be it in suffering, or whatever form the work may come ; to work for Him anyhow is good and pleasant, and seems a thing to be very thankful for ; a great honour. The work may be quite hidden, but day by day, hour by hour, it will be revealed ; and the work and the strength will be apportioned equally, and sent together.

Then, also, there is a deep sense of having been most unfit to depart at the time when it was eagerly desired. A feeling of shame and wonder, too, that you could ever have thought yourself ready then, when now, in looking back, you see how your will was at variance with the will of God ; how much you were seeking self, and ease, and rest, when you thought that you were seeking God. O, how full of delusion the past seems ! at times you scarcely dare to think of it ; to remember how much better you thought yourself and your state than there was reason to do ;—how you fancied it was well with you, when you now see that it was far otherwise. You feel very thankful that you were not cut off then, before you knew more of God, and of yourself, before your will was conformed to His will. You feel now that you know nothing ; that you have no idea what is the best for you ; that you would not

choose if you could, but like best to leave yourself in His hands, either to serve Him by suffering, so long as He sees fit, or to return to active service ;—that you leave the time of your departure wholly to Him, seeking to have no speculations about it, but to grow, day by day, in love to Him, so that for your love to Him, the time shall seem to you but a day. You do not want to die now ; you want only to have no separate will, and to lose yourself in God.

Formerly you looked on your sojourn here as absence from God,—almost entire separation ; you felt that you were always *preparing* to be with Him, but yet far off from Him ; and this added greatly to the weariness of life, and the eagerness to die. Now, you have learned that He is ever present with you, though you do not always realize it. That the one object of your life should be to live with Him *now*,—to feel that He is “about your path and your lying down, and acquainted with all your ways,”⁴—that you never need to be alone, but may ever say, “I am not alone, for the Father is with me.”⁵ You have learned, in some degree, to understand His exceeding nearness to you ; His tender sympathy ; His sharing all your thoughts, and your very heart,—that in Him all your deepest cravings are satisfied,—that you will not lead a sad and solitary life, because He will be always with you, your “Friend” and “Counsellor,” your “Lord and Master,” yea, even your “Husband.” That the

⁴ Ps. cxxxix. 3.

⁵ John viii. 16.

more you learn of Him here, the more ready you will be to enter into, and enjoy His presence hereafter. That there is much to learn about Him, and about yourself here ; that you would fear lest you should not learn all, and should be cut off only too soon, if you did not know the exceeding patience of your Teacher, and that His love is so wonderful, that He will have you to be "conformed to His image."⁶

At times you have feared lest there should be something wrong in this change of mind. You have feared lest it proved a diminution of your love to Him, and that you desire less to be with Him. But it is far otherwise ; and you have the deepest reason to give thanks that you have at length been brought into this state, though you may have passed through fearful conflicts ere you attained to it.

Remember, too, that however confirmed this state of mind may seem, it is subject to fluctuation, and that very sudden temptations to impatience and repining may seize you, and take the more hold upon you from their coming unawares. There is no state on this side the grave in which we must cease to stand upon our "watch tower." "Watch ye and pray, lest ye enter into temptation."⁷ "Watch thou in all things, endure afflictions."⁸

"Work your work betimes, and in His time He will give you your reward."⁹

⁶ Rom. viii. 29.

⁸ 2 Tim. iv. 5.

⁷ Mark xiv. 38.

⁹ Ecc'us. li. 30

You will find work enough to do, if you will but be constantly looking up to God to give you your hourly portion of it, and to show you what He would have you to do ; and if you are constantly looking out for it. It will come to you probably in bearing and forbearing ; in little acts of self-denial ; in helping others, in ways for which you will get no credit ; for theirs will be the seen, and yours the unseen, work :—in the continual renunciation of your own will ;—and living for others instead of for yourself. All that you have learned in your sharper sickness ; all that you are learning now in its lengthened effects of weakness, so great as to disable you from the delights of active service ; will greatly assist you in what now lies before you.

PART VII

DEATH



Death

I

The Fear of Death, and the Fear taken away

THERE are some persons who have never known the fear of death ; they have often seemed to be very nearly dying, but they have always rejoiced ; they have hailed the Angel of death as a bright presence, they have spoken of death as a joyful prospect ; of death itself as "beautiful." They have never had any sympathy with those who have spoken fearfully of it ; they have thought it either want of moral courage, or great want of faith, or a proof of earthliness of heart ; they have said hard words, or indulged in hard thoughts of others. They say that they cannot understand how any one can fear death. But their turn is come at last ! "Fearfulness and trembling are coming upon them"¹ now, their "heart is sore pained, and withered like grass."² O how their hard words about others come back upon them now !

¹ Ps. lv. 5.

² Ps. cii. 4.

I am chief.' I give myself into the hands of a boundless love : as an infinite misery, I cast myself upon an infinite mercy. This is my only stay, but it is all-sufficing."

But though some may desire death, others may shrink from it to their inmost souls ; they may desire life under any form of suffering, rather than to meet death. In some minds there is an instinctive, a natural fear of death ; from which they are "all their lifetime subject to bondage."⁵ The very idea of death is a terror to them ; they can scarcely bear to hear the subject mentioned ; they have tried by faith and earnest prayer to overcome this dread ; but all their lifetime it abides with them until they are brought into the very presence of death. Then generally, either the fear is removed, or the soul that has been ever dreading the last hour, passes out of life unknowingly, and without suffering of body or mind. There may be instances to the contrary, but they are rare. All the prayers offered day by day that the fear of death might be removed, are answered now ; they were not in vain, they were heard, and were not forgotten before God. Very many persons have a peculiar dread of a last illness ; they know that it must come ; but O how their soul shrinks from it ! They would like to die suddenly, to escape it all. Is it the fear of pain that makes you afraid ? the thought that then, when the last hour is drawing nigh, pain will put forth its full strength : a strength that you have never known

⁵ Heb. ii. 15.

before ; and does your whole soul shrink from this ? He who said, " Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me,"⁶ knows and understands your fear.

He tasted the fear and shrinking from death, that He might understand it all, and that not one of His children might ever pass through it alone. Is it the helplessness of those last hours ? the unspeakable suffering, which no heart but your own can share or realize, that distresses you ? the possibility of doing or saying something wrong that haunts you ? of being unable, through broken speech, to convey your meaning ? Fear not ; there is One who knows and understands it all ; who looks at your thoughts and intentions, and looks into your heart the most tenderly, when He knows that none else can. You have given yourself to Him. Fear not ; He will not leave you at the last hour, for He has called you to it, and He will lead you through it. He said, " I have a Baptism to be baptized with, and how am I straitened till it be accomplished."⁷ It was accomplished in Him : and when He said, " It is finished,"⁸ then the loneliness of the deepest darkness of death was finished for each of His followers. He will come to fetch you ; trust yourself to Him who says, " Lo, I am with thee always."⁹ " Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid." It is in vain for you to think what you would like best—God will choose for you ; and be sure that He will choose the very best

⁶ Matt. xxvi. 39.

⁷ Luke xii. 50.

⁸ John xix. 30.

⁹ Matt. xxviii. 20.

¹ John xiv. 1.

thing for you—that which you will hereafter see was the best. Do not judge of your state by your desire for death or for life; it is a dangerous and false criterion. For those to whom life has been very sweet; who have enjoyed it; who have many ties—especially the nearest and closest ties, husband or wife or children;—who see a fair and bright prospect before them, and have comforts and blessings innumerable around them;—it is a very difficult thing to give up all with a willing and glad heart, or even, with the whole soul, to say, “Thy will be done.”

Whilst to others whose ties are few, and their prospects dark; who have none depending on them, and none “who loves them best,” it may be very easy to be willing, and thankful to lay aside the weary worn-out body. No one ought, in the one case, to say that it is sinful not to be more desirous to depart; or in the other, that it is a proof of readiness and submission to wish to go.

You sometimes, perhaps, say to your friends, “Do not pray for my life.” But ought you to have such a choice? Is it not better to pray God to give us life or death, sickness or health, as it pleases Him?

It has been sometimes spoken of as a proof of a desire for, and readiness to depart, when these words have been said; but surely it is a higher state to leave all to Him, and scarcely to know yourself which you wish. We are poor judges: but let us leave off to judge each other, and leave

it to Him who has "appointed a set time"² to each of us, and will "remember" us. And for ourselves, let the true language of our hearts be—

"Let me never choose,
Or to live or die.
Bind or bruise,
In Thy hands I lie.

"For my blinded choice
Like myself would be,
I rejoice
That Thou choose for me."

II

The Publicity of a Death-bed, and the Temptation to choose the Circumstances of it

IT is not only death that some people fear, but there is a peculiar shrinking from the sort of publicity of a death-bed. How often they think, "If I might but die in the night; or if there were but one person with me; or only one friend, and a pastor to commend my soul to God, then to die would seem much easier; but I dread the distraction of thought that the presence of many may produce—their very weeping and sorrow will fill my thoughts, and oppress and sadden my mind. I feel as if I could not bear it. Then, too, I fear lest I should be tempted to speak anything merely to give them pleasure, or for words to be remembered—I fear lest they should be *words*. I fear,

² Job xiv. 13.

too, lest I should at the last dishonour my Lord and Master, who has 'fed me all my life long.'³ I fear, too, lest at the last there should be impatience, or evil words, or even in delirium, when those fearful pains come which will separate the soul from the body."

These are most natural fears indeed, and are not inconsistent with true faith. These fears are not peculiar to you. From the intuitive knowledge of the wants of all her children, the Church teaches us to pray—"Thou knowest, Lord, the secrets of our hearts; shut not Thy merciful ears to our prayer; but spare us, Lord most holy, O God most mighty, O holy and merciful Saviour, Thou most worthy Judge eternal, suffer us not at our last hour, for any pains of death to fall from Thee." We may offer this prayer continually now, and may be sure that it will be answered to us when the time of need actually arrives.

Beware of the temptation to choose the *circumstances* of your death. You cannot choose if you would. You will be just where your heavenly Father sees fit. He will call you by night or by day; alone or in company; sleeping or waking, as "seemeth good in His sight;"⁴ leave it all to Him. Do not revolve the possible circumstances, or pains, or words. Do not judge from your present symptoms what turn they *must* take, what suffering they *must* bring. All things may be wholly changed: another illness may be the appointed

³ Gen. xlviii. 15.

⁴ Luke x. 21.

messenger to call you away. You may be in a place in which you never yet have been; with persons whom you never yet saw. It is useless to speculate upon it, or to distress your mind with forms of trial which may never come nigh unto you. Of this be sure, that you will not be alone, for "The Father will be with" you.⁵

III

The right way of viewing Death

YES, it is most awful to meet death, because death is the "wages of sin,"⁶ and to meet that last full judgment with nothing to offer in return, but the very thing which has brought the punishment—sin itself. "By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men."⁷ But is there no other way of looking on death? Yes, there is; "Thanks be to God which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."⁸

"He hath overcome the sharpness of death, and opened the kingdom of Heaven to all believers." And He who is our Judge, is also our Saviour. "His name shall be called Jesus, for He shall save His people from their sins."⁹ He has said, "O death, I will be thy plague,"¹ "I have ransomed

⁵ John xvi. 32.

⁶ Rom. vi. 23.

⁷ Rom. v. 12.

⁸ 1 Cor. xv. 57.

⁹ Matt i. 21.

¹ Hosea xiii. 14.

thee from the power of death." "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?"² "Fear not, for I am with thee."³ He has passed through death. "He tasted death for every man;"⁴ He has redeemed it from its loneliness; from henceforth no one can go down into death alone; for even there shall "Thy hand lead me, and Thy right hand shall uphold me."⁵ He is near that justifieth thee."⁶ He is the companion of every one whom He calls into the dark valley. "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for Thou art with me; Thy rod and Thy staff, they comfort me."⁷

All the weariness and languor of dying, all its unutterable pains, all its exceeding vagueness, all its fears and temptations, all its darkness and dreariness, He passed through. He knows every step of the way, and He comes to fetch each one Himself. He "carries them on His shoulders rejoicing;"⁸ it is a "land that no man passeth through,"⁹ a way in which no one can truly help another; yet He who has gone every step of the way knows the way Himself, and He will conduct each child of His safely through it. Fear not to go down with Him into the dark river; it may prove boisterous for a season; the waves may threaten to drown you; but fear not, He is with

² 1 Cor. xv. 55.

⁵ Ps. cxxxix. 10.

³ Isa. xli. 10.

⁶ Isa. l. 8.

⁴ Heb. ii. 2.

⁷ Ps. xxiii. 4.

⁸ Luke xv. 5.

⁹ Jer. ii. 6.

you. "He will hold you by your right hand, saying unto you, Fear not."¹

Whatever weakness you may be called to pass through, He will be the "*strength* of your *heart*," He will sustain thee, however the body may fail.

In the deepest weakness you will meet strength such as you never knew before, for the Almighty Lord will be with you, and strengthen you. You will never know the fulness of His strength, until you know your utmost weakness; then shall His "strength be made perfect in your weakness."²

The way is very short, shorter than you can imagine, until you reach the end. You will surely find that a highway shall be there,"³ for He with whom and in whom you walk, is the "Way." Walk in *that* way, and in a little while you "shall come to Zion with songs, and everlasting joy upon your head. You shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away."⁴

You shall be "delivered from the burden of the flesh," and be in "joy and felicity" for ever. "And God shall wipe away all tears from your eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain; for the former things have passed away."

¹ Isa. xli. 13.

² Ps. lxxiii. 26.

³ Cor. xii. 9.

⁴ Isa. xxxv. 8.

⁵ Isa. xxxv. 10.

⁶ Rev. xxi. 4.



APPENDIX

OF

Suggestions to Persons in Attendance

ON THE

Sick and Dying



Suggestions, &c.

IT is generally supposed that, in the states of exhaustion to which some sick people are liable, the mind is in as torpid a state as is the body. But this is by no means the case. There may be such entire loss of bodily power, that the sick person may be unable to move hand or foot, or by the utmost effort to make any movement of the lips, or sigh of any kind. Even medical men, with their more exact means of judging of the state, may suppose it to be one of entire unconsciousness. In short faintings or in epileptic fits, this is usually the case; but it is otherwise in the long and weary attacks of exhaustion to which some persons are subject. At such times, when life seems ebbing fast, the mind is often more undisturbed, and able to hold closer converse with the world unseen, than when the eyes are opened to the world around.

It may not be any act of continued prayer, but a perfect sense of the presence of God; of resting in His love; a consciousness of death being brought very near; the world unseen close at hand; of life

passing away, and of yielding up the body, soul, and spirit into the hands of "the faithful Creator."¹ All this, and much more may be passing between the soul and God, when the friends beside the bed think that the mind is inactive.

This being the case, it is of great consequence that nurses and attendants should know the fact, and thereby learn how to treat the patient.

I. They should say nothing in the room, which they would not wish the sick person to hear, or would not say *to* them at another time. For it is certain in all states (excepting in cases of deafness), that hearing is the sense that last goes, and first returns.

II. They should avoid needlessly disturbing or troubling the patient. Very little can be done in such cases. Gently applying restoratives to the forehead and nostrils; putting hot bottles to the feet; rubbing the hands and feet if they are numbed or cold (but avoiding this when they are not, and also all touching of the person, as it often causes distress, and a great sense of additional fatigue); and if possible, with a spoon, giving stimulants. Besides these things nothing can be done; therefore, no course remains but quiet waiting with patience, and occasionally attempting afresh to minister in these ways.

III. Much may be done for the comfort and soothing of a person in this state, by some one who is beside them either occasionally reading a Collect,

¹ 1 Pet. iv. 19.

or a verse of Holy Scripture, or repeating a few words ; but this must be done *very slowly, distinctly*, with intervals ; *not* in a whisper or in a loud voice, but clearly and *calmly*, and the sentences very short. No one can tell the comfort of this, without having had it tried in their own case.

IV. Questions should rarely be asked, and as soon as it is seen that they cannot be answered, it should be said : " Do not try to answer me, I see you cannot ;" otherwise a sense is left on the mind of something undone which ought to be attempted, and the impossibility becomes painful.

When a question is asked, it should not be done suddenly, but the hand gently touched or taken hold of whilst speaking.

V. When a person is recovering, it should not be attempted to make them speak soon ; a few gentle words, perhaps of thankfulness for their being better, should be said, but no effort called for, and the utmost quietness observed for a long time afterwards.

Excepting the last sentences, all that has been said, it is believed, applies equally to the case of most dying persons. Often weakness and exhaustion is so great, that scarcely a sign of life can be given.

Friends are eager to hear some last words, and, if not that, at least to receive some sign of faith, or hope, or love. Perhaps some question is asked as to the hope that is in them, and it is said, " If you cannot answer press my hand." Perhaps the

effort is made—the request is fulfilled—it may have cost a very great effort to the dying person ; it may have distracted their thoughts very painfully to make this effort, and thus ~~have~~ withdrawn them in part from communion with God, and with the world unseen. And why was this asked ? Because we are apt to “seek after a sign.”² Whereas, the life is the true evidence, and not the mere state when the soul is passing out of consciousness. The holiest souls may have a last conflict with sin ; they may be spoken to at that moment ; they may utter words which will give no comfort to their friends to think upon. Leave them to God to teach them ; leave it to Him to give them the words to speak, if thereby they shall glorify His name. If they can speak, they surely will ; if not, trust their silence to Him in faith, for He can interpret it. If they cannot have the help and comfort of the presence and ministration of a pastor, you may help them greatly by speaking to them words of prayer or Holy Scripture ; not chiefly words of soothing or of mere comfort. Speak to them of sin, of pardon, of “the blood of Christ which cleanseth from all sin,”³ of the name of Jesus, of the love of Christ to sinners, of Him who hath “overcome the sharpness of death, and opened the kingdom of heaven to all believers,” of His victory over sin, of “death having no more dominion over them.”⁴ If they can speak and say words to you, they surely will ; if not, trust them to

² Mark viii. 12.³ 1 John i. 7.⁴ Rom. vi. 9.

God, and it shall be well with them and with you also. Remember that to the question, "When shall I come to appear before the presence of God?"⁵ the answer has been given, "Behold, I stand at the door and knock."⁶ It is a moment full of awe; therefore be careful not to come between that soul and God—not to hinder it from hearing his voice. He has taken the soul apart. He is speaking; therefore "let your words be few."⁷ If any sounds can reach the ear now, if any words can touch the heart, they will be His words and not yours. Speak only in His words, and not your own. The soul is about to be left alone with God: suffer it, then, to draw nigh unto Him, and to commit itself to Him, and to lie down in His arms in peace.

But you will perhaps say, "We may learn so much by the words of the dying—a death-bed is so edifying." Yes, it is so if God speaks by them, not otherwise; and doubt not, but earnestly believe, that, if He has yet words for them to say, He will give them the power to speak, and also the words; and then they will come with power to your hearts. But leave it to Him, do not interfere with His work.

Do not put too much dependence on those last words: they may be only the dying words of mortal agony; they may be groans which can, or which cannot be uttered. It is not in this way that you are to look for a blessing from death-beds. Look

⁵ Ps. xlii. 2.

⁶ Rev. iii. 20. ,

⁷ Eccles. v. 2.

at death as the "wages of sin,"⁸ as a bitter and awful sentence which has been passed upon all men.

Then look at it as that which Christ came to conquer, so that we may say, "Thanks be to God who giveth us the victory, through Jesus Christ our Lord."⁹

Look at it also as that to which you must come yourself, that for which you must make preparation.

Look at it as a time of near and solemn communion with God, when you are called to go down with another into the valley of the shadow of death.

At the river you must part company, and leave the soul of your brother or sister in the hands of Jesus, who has "tasted death for every man,"¹ and will carry each soul safely into His own kingdom.

Look at it as bringing you very near to the world unseen, as opening a door in heaven for you: it will be your fault if it is ever again closed. Look at it as teaching you the meaning of the words you so often say: "I believe in the Holy Catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting."

⁸ Rom. vi. 23.

⁹ 1 Cor. xv. 57.

¹ Heb. ii. 9.

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